

Clissmann Donkey Walking Holidays
Cronybyrne
Rathdrum
Co. Wicklow Ireland

Donkey Walking Holiday in the Wicklow Mountains

Day 1 - Arrival day

Please inform us about your arrival times so that we can make arrangements to pick you up either from the airport or organise a taxi from the local bus stop. (If you are arriving late we will bring you directly to your Guesthouse and see you the following morning.)

We will introduce you to your donkey companion. Then your new donkey friend will bring you on a walk around our farm.

This will be followed by a detailed discussion of your trip and we will supply you with maps and brochures, etc.

Your first overnight will be in the village of Rathdrum and we will bring you there.

Rathdrum

Rathdrum is situated high on the western side of the Avonmore Valley. The town has been the location of many films and is the birthplace of Charles Stewart Parnell, one of the greatest political leaders of modern Irish history. 5 local pubs make the temptation for an after dinner pub crawl irresistible!

Dinner: Jacob's Well or Bates Restaurant in Rathdrum

Overnight: Jacob's Well B/B, Helen and Noel Jacob, Rathdrum, Tel. +353 404 46620

Day 2 - Before you set off on your travels

After a full Irish breakfast it's back to Clissmann's Farm at Cronybyrne to meet your donkey again. We will give you more instructions on how to check your donkey's well-being and look after him on the road. You will then give him a thorough brushing, pack your saddle bags and settle them comfortably on the donkey rug and off you go.....

Please do not forget to bring your brush with you as you need to brush your donkey every day before departure.

If you have any problems with your donkey you must ring us immediately please do not wait to tell us at the end of your trip – its too late then. Your donkey is depending on you to mind him/her properly.

Oats will be available at all the B/B's so your donkey does not have to carry them. Please ensure that the panniers have been evenly packed and if they slip please contact us.

We will provide you with lunch today.

Cronybyrne to “The Meetings” (18 km, gradient: 150 m)

Walk to Garryduff Crossroads and go straight through the crossroad. Then on your left you will pass a blue farmhouse and then a new bungalow with a garden full of flowers. This farm belongs to Sheila and Brendan Byrne. Further along this road you will see a cream coloured house on your right. Just there, there is a turn to the right. Make sure to take this turn and do not go down the steep hill. Along this road you will have the forest on your right and lovely views of the sea on your left.

Continue along this road until you meet a junction with a triangle of grass in the middle of the road. Turn left here onto a small road with grass growing down the middle. Continue along this road until you walk under a railway bridge. Shortly after the bridge you will see a Yield sign at a T junction. Turn left onto this bigger road following the signs for the R752 in the direction of Wicklow/ Glenealy.

After approx 250m you will see a right hand turn with the signs WSPCA animal sanctuary and L5118. Turn right onto this road. Follow this road uphill and pass the animal sanctuary. Shortly after the gates of the animal sanctuary you will see another triangle of grass in the road – continue straight on here, following the sign for Parnell Drive. Approx 100m meters later you will come to a T junction with a house directly in front of you. Turn right here in the direction of Rathdrum.

Walking in the direction of Rathdrum, take the 2nd left hand turn. Continue on this road for approx 1 hour. You will then find yourself on a steep winding hill passing the entrance to Castle Howard on your left. At the bottom of the hill you cross a stone bridge. Shortly after this you will arrive at a junction where you turn left. This will bring you downhill to The Meetings and Ashton House on your left hand side where Catriona will be waiting for you.

“**The Meetings” and The Vale of Avoca** are in a very unique area rich in history and heritage. Peace and tranquillity permeate its deep river valleys and densely wooded hills. The poet Thomas Moore (1779-1851) immortalised the valley in his poem, “Sweet Vale of Avoca”. Catriona and Shane, your hosts, are full of information about their home area and are always happy to give you lots of advice.

Dinner: The Meetings Pub, Restaurant and craft shop in The Meetings, Avoca

Overnight: Ashton House, The Meetings, Catriona Morgan and Shane, Tel. +353 86 3760783

Day 3 - The Meetings, The Mottee Stone, Avoca and the Copper Mines (variable km, gradient: 150 m)

The Meetings of the Waters

Where the Avonmore and Avonbeg meet amidst glittering waters and quiet woodlands, an area made famous worldwide by Thomas Moore’s melody “Sweet Vale of Avoca”

Castle Howard

The house, in private ownership, is a curious mixture of castellation and Gothic. It was designed by Richard Morrison, a pupil of James Gandon. James Gandon designed some of the most stunning Georgian buildings in Dublin, including the Four Courts and the Custom House on the river Liffey.

The Mottee Stone

A legacy of the ice age, this huge granite rock offers the most amazing views of the county. Iron rungs make it possible to climb to the top of the stone and on a clear day it's sometimes possible to see the distant outline of Wales.

Avoca

The village of Avoca is known worldwide because of the mines, the writings of Thomas Moore, Avoca Handweavers and most recently the BBC film "Ballykissangel". Avoca Handweavers built around 1723, is one of the oldest hand weaving mills in the country.

The Copper Mines

Bell Rock marks the entrance to the mines. Copper and sulphur have been mined in Avoca since the Bronze Age. However, the main commercial activities began over 250 year ago, but the 1840's were the boom years with over 1000 men employed in the industry. The chimney stacks of the great Pumping stations can still be seen scattered throughout the valley. Gold was discovered in 1796... now there's a great conversation to follow up in the pub.

There are several different trips that you can do starting out from Catriona's house and she will be happy to give you advice about them.

Dinner: Avoca Handweavers Café, Fitzgerald's Pub Avoca, The Meetings Pub

Overnight: Ashton House, The Meetings, Catriona Morgan and Shane, Tel. +353 86 3760783

Day 4 - "The Meetings" to the Valley of Glenmalure (12,5-15 km, gradient: 150 m)

This is one of the longest days so it's advisable to start off reasonably early in the morning so that you and your donkey friend can have a good long break at lunchtime, or even before. Leaving Ashton House carefully cross the road, walk a little in the direction of Rathdrum and then take the first turn left to Ballinaclash. Continue on this road and stay left going over the stone bridge. On the other side of the bridge turn right in front of Phelan's pub. A cooling drink at Phelan's in Ballinaclash is recommended. Your donkey can be left in the field opposite the pub.

Continue past Phelan's pub until you reach a Y in the road. Keep left here. Pass a football field and the Birches housing estate on your left. Continue straight on this road until you come to a cross roads, where you turn right. Greenan Farm Museum and Maze will be on your right hand side. There is a coffee shop here so you could have a nice lunch and there is also grazing for your donkey. (Only open at weekends in May & September)

Leaving the Maze, turn right and continue straight on downhill to Greenan bridge, cross the bridge, turn left and continue along the valley towards Glenmalure.

The Glenmalure Lodge Hotel is situated in the longest glacial valley in Ireland and the British Isles. It is a favourite haunt for hill walkers and mountain climbers. Surrounded by majestic hills, it nestles cosily half-way down the valley.

Dinner: Glenmalure Lodge Hotel. Home-cooking is a speciality and highly recommended and the food portions are enormous. Most of the meat and vegetables are locally sourced.

Overnight: Glenmalure Lodge Hotel, Ann and Pat Dowling, Tel. +353 404 46188

Day 5 - Glenmalure to Glendalough (9 km, gradient: 300 m)

A spectacular walk along the Military Road across the mountain will bring you from one valley to another. It is a good idea to buy a packed lunch from the hotel and something to drink as there are no pubs or shops along the way. The scenery is breathtaking. Coming out of the hotel you turn right, at the crossroads you turn right. There's quite a steep climb but it's really worthwhile. The views and vistas across the Wicklow Mountains are a sheer delight. The road eventually winds its way gently down into Laragh. At the junction at the end of the road you turn left into Laragh. Lynham's Hotel is on your right in the centre of the village. Go into the hotel reception for directions to the location of the field for your donkey. At this stage you can also leave the panniers in the hotel. It's approx. ½ an hour walk to the donkey field. You can make arrangements for someone from the hotel to pick you up by car from the field and bring you back to the hotel.

Dinner: Complimentary dinner at Lynham's Restaurant in the hotel.
(2 course meal with tea/coffee - Drinks to be paid separately)

Overnight: Lynham's Hotel, Laragh, Tel. 0404.45345

Day 6 – Glendalough (variabel)

As you are spending a second night in Laragh there are various wonderful trips you can do today. While your donkey has a day off, you can visit the Monastic city of Glendalough by guided driving tour.

At the Visitor Centre there is an excellent Exhibition on the Monastic City. (Please ask for the translation if you need one). Then you can view a very interesting Film on Early Christian Ireland, it's monasteries, it's gold and silver chalices and it's famous books – The Book of Kells, Armagh and Drimna and of course the story of St. Kevin who founded Glendalough. Then you can go and explore the Monastic City itself – the beautifully preserved Round Tower, the Cathedral, St. Kevin's Kitchen. These buildings are mainly 9th and 10th Century. There is a path – The Green Road to the Poulanass waterfall, the Spink and the lakes – so much to see and enjoy.

You can chat to Aoife or Barbara at Lynham's Hotel about further information on walks in the area. Lynham's pub in Laragh is one of the county's most famous landmarks. Visited by artists, poets, locals, politicians and real Irish characters you will always find someone interesting to talk to and you will be well fed.

Dinner: Lynhams, The Wicklow Heather, Glendalough Hotel

Overnight: Lynham's Hotel, Laragh, Tel. +353 404 45345

Day 7 - Glendalough to Cronybyrne (10 km, gradient: 150 m)

This is a lovely mountain trip via Trooperstown Wood to Cronybyrne. There are no shops or pubs once you leave Laragh, so it important to shop for lunch before you leave. There are 2 shops in Laragh, McCoys Shop and Glendalough Green shop and café.

Leaving the field you turn right, walking away from the village of Laragh. You will come to Trooperstown Lodge B/B, which is on your left. You take a right turn here and continue over the

concrete bridge, turn right again. Follow this road all the way until you reach the tarmac road. You will see a telephone mast. Turn left onto the tarmac road and at a right turn you will see a little old fashioned green post-box built into the wall, turn right here.

Continue to the end of this road until you arrive at a T-junction and turn right at this junction.

Continue along this road until you reach another T-junction and a gate lodge on your right. There is a tree in the middle of the road. Turn left here, the entrance to Cronybyrne Courtyard is just in front of you, pass this and walk for about ¾ km and you will see the entrance to our farm.

We'll be waiting for you to share your experiences of the holiday before bringing you back to your B&B.

Dinner: Jacob's Well, Bates Restaurant in Rathdrum

Overnight: Jacob's Well B/B, Helen and Noel Jacob, Rathdrum, Tel. +353 404 46620

Day 8 – Departure Day

Your booked holiday will include the following:

- 7 Overnights and breakfasts and one dinner voucher per person for Lynham's Hotel. (Our experience is that people prefer to make their own dinner arrangements as there is such a variety en route on offer.)
- Packed lunch on your first day.
- Complimentary transfers to and from our farm to your B/B in Rathdrum.
- A well trained donkey as your walking companion and detailed instruction on how to look after her/him, how to brush her/him properly and check her/his feet.
- Your donkey companion will have panniers to take approx. 15 kilos. She/he will have a blanket or rug under the panniers and a weatherproof cover to keep your luggage dry. We will supply you with a halter and brush. We leave a bucket and oats at all the overnight stops so that you do not need to carry them en route.
- Secured fields, grazing and water and fodder for your donkey every day.
- Detailed instruction on the route you will be taking and detailed maps and information on the areas you will be visiting.
- A guided driving tour to the lakes in Glendalough.
- Entrance vouchers to Greenan Farm Museum and Maze (open weekends May, June & September)
- A rescue team on call if you should need help.

*All accommodation based on availability, nearby alternatives in Ashford, Wicklow, Rathdrum or Roundwood may be used.