

WILDLIFE TRAVEL



7th to 12th (or 14th) June 2018 (6 or 8 days)

THE BURREN

Wild flowers and ancient sites

This delightful area of western Ireland is famous for its wild flowers, limestone landscape and fascinating history.

The Burren is known for its unusual collection of plants, ranging from those of the western lowlands of the British Isles to **arctic, alpine and mediterranean** species. In amongst the **limestone pavement** grows a fascinating flora including colourful flowers, ferns, miniature trees, and several orchids including local specialities. The limestone 'pavement' reaches the sea forming an attractive coastline and, to the north, lie the wildlife-rich shores of Galway Bay. Based in a friendly guesthouse in Lisdoonvarna, we explore both coastal and inland habitats.

We will visit the eastern turlough lakes, plant-rich marshes, remote slopes clothed in hazel woodlands, the unique landscape of **Mullach Mor** mountain and the infamous shores of **Galway Bay**. Nearby are the stunning **Cliffs of Moher**, the second tallest sea cliffs in Europe and home to puffin, razorbill, guillemot and black guillemot. As well as botanical treasures, there are often good numbers of butterflies and dragonflies to be seen. The Burren also boasts an historical heritage dating from the Neolithic and we will visit **historic sites**, such as **Poul nabrone Dolmen Tomb** and **Corcomroe Abbey**.

The holiday starts and finishes at our accommodation in Lisdoonvarna so that you can choose to fly or travel by train and ferry from the UK. We can advise on travel and arrange local transfers and flights as needed. You can **extend the trip** to see more of this lovely part of western Ireland, particularly if you would like to take a day boat trip to the fascinating **Aran Islands** where Gaelic is still spoken by the inhabitants, or to have a day in Galway.

"accommodation couldn't have been better... very welcoming"
"excellent - a good introduction to a fascinating area"
Burren 2012



Wildlife and culture holidays

Price
£945 6 days (£1065 8)

Single Room Supplement
£60 6 days (£70 8)

Half board

- Day 1** To Lisdoonvarna
- Day 2** Poll Salach, Fanore
- Day 3** Sleive Carran
- Day 4** Mullach Mor, L. Bunny
- Day 5** Cliffs of Moher
- Day 6** From Lisdoonvarna

Leader
Brian Eversham
& 2nd leader

Wild flowers, natural history, culture

Flights not included (but can be added) to allow flexibility or travel by train/ferry



Our profits are donated to **The Wildlife Trusts**



The Burren - Wild flowers & ancient sites

Amongst the many plants to be found are the 'Burren' rose *Rosa pimpinellifolia*, **mountain avens** *Dryas octopetala*, the 'Burren' rockrose *Helianthemum canum*, **bloody cranesbill** *Geranium sanguineum*, and numerous orchids. We may be able to catch the last of the season's **spring gentian** *Gentiana verna*. As well as the limestone pavement, we will explore bogs and marshes, sand dunes, rocky shores and hazel woodland where ancient history mixes with natural history in a unique way. The holiday is ideal for anyone with a general interest in wildlife as well as the keen botanist. The local hospitality and good local fare are a bonus. We will discover how man has influenced the natural history, and visit sites including megalithic tombs, Iron Age forts and more recent monuments showing their 'Celtic' origins. There is plenty of wildlife interest beyond the wild flowers, including butterflies and moths, dragonflies, Irish hare and even pine marten.

ITINERARY

The itinerary, particularly the order of visits, may be changed to suit the weather, other local conditions and practicalities or the seasonal interest in different areas.

Day 1 After our various journeys to the west of Ireland, we **meet at our accommodation in Lisdoonvarna**, a small spa town on the edge of the limestone. Our evening meal will be at one of the pleasant local restaurants nearby (see **Travel to Ireland** on back page).

Day 2 We explore the beautiful area around **Poll Salach** where the limestone pavement stretches out into the sea. In the cracks of the rocks grow many species of plants including ferns, orchids, mountain avens and many dwarfed shrubs and 'trees'. We hope to find frog orchid amongst the many interesting plants growing in the short turf on the limestone. On **Galway Bay** we will see shoreland plants and hopefully have views of the seals that breed in the bay. Lunch will be at Ballyvaughan Garden Tea Rooms. We return via the beautiful Caher Valley to look for some later flowering spring gentian and then visit **Fanore Sands** to explore the dunes and seashore with its interesting fossils as well as plants.

Day 3 We drive into the magical and remote area around of Keelhilla on **Slieve Carran** where we walk across the limestone to a lovely hazel woodland and the remains of a sacred well where St. Colman MacDuagh set up a hermitage in the 7th century. The damp conditions hold a contrasting range of plants and the peaceful location adds to the enjoyment. After a late lunch on the coast, we visit the ruins of **Corcomroe Abbey**, with ferns and other plants growing on its ancient walls. Finally, we have an optional walk up the slopes of Cappanawalla to see **large-flowered butterwort**, *Pinguicula grandiflora*.

Day 4 We travel east to the saucer-shaped mountain of **Mullach Mor** and the **turloughs** of the eastern Burren. A wonderful landscape full of botanical and other interest. The area is famous for several plants including **shrubby cinquefoil**, *Potentilla fruticosa*, and the **turlough violet**, *Viola persicifolia*, as well as a myriad of orchids including **fly orchid** *Ophrys insectifera* and **flecked marsh-orchid** *Dactylorhiza cruenta*. We may also find the seed-heads of the dense-flowered orchid, *Neotinea maculata*. The shores of **Lough Bunny** will, no doubt, produce a fascinating collection of marsh-orchids and other plants and it's a good area for dragonflies. On our way back we will stop at the ruins of the **ancient cathedral** and **Celtic crosses** at **Kilfenora** (and the very handy café).



Day 5 Today we visit the **Cliffs of Moher**, the second tallest sea cliffs in Europe, famous for spectacular views, clifftop flowers and thousands of nesting seabirds. The Visitor Centre has excellent displays about the history and wildlife. After lunch we visit the enigmatic **Poulnabrone Portal Tomb**, an area also good for plants, and explore a 'bog' to see some of the characteristic plants such as sundews and marsh cinquefoil.

Day 6 Our holiday finishes after breakfast. Transfers to Shannon, Ennis or Galway can be arranged if needed (see information on **Travel to Ireland** on back page).

Extension (not led but the leader will help with local information and transport arrangements as needed). **Days 7 and 8** You can take a days' boat trip to the **Aran Islands**, a half hour sea crossing (c 20-30 euros) takes you to the **Isle of Inisheer** where a leisurely walk takes you around ancient, walled fields to discover the local history and way of life, and possibly more orchids. You can extend the boat trip (or take an separate trip) to visit the seabird colonies of the **Cliffs of Moher**. A local walk, a trip to the coast, or a day in Galway (easily accessible by local bus) are also possible or just enjoy the ambiance of this lovely part of western Ireland.



Accommodation, meals, travel and weather

Our accommodation, as usual, will be at **Caherleigh House** guesthouse in Lisdoonvarna. Our host makes us very welcome and cups of tea are plentiful. Each of the 13 pleasant rooms has an ensuite bathroom (bath or shower). The cooked breakfasts are delicious. Evening meals are taken in nearby restaurants within a short walking distance, except for one evening when we dine at **Ballinalacken Castle**, a wonderful Country House Hotel not far from Lisdoonvarna, with views over the coast (transport included). Lunches are not included, allowing choices at local pubs/cafes. Picnic items can be bought locally if wished. Transport will be by small coach. The weather should be warm and mostly sunny, although the UK is always unpredictable and rain possible. We will adapt our itinerary as needed.

Fitness

Coach journeys are of between 20 to approx 60 minutes. Walks are of varying lengths but not more than about a couple of miles and we walk at a leisurely pace with plenty of time for photography. At some places much can be seen on short, half hour walks but at some sites we will walk for a couple of hours or so. Some of the walking is on limestone pavement and (lightweight) walking boots are essential. There is an optional walk gradually taking us uphill (and down) on one day (about half an hour gently uphill). **You need to have a reasonable level of fitness but none of the walking is strenuous.**



Leaders

Our leader, **Brian Eversham**, is the Chief Executive of the **Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire (BCN)** and a Director of Wildlife Travel. Brian has led several previous trips for Wildlife Travel including previous visits to the Burren. His enthusiasm for natural history is contagious. A second leader will accompany Brian if there is a larger group. Our leaders will provide you with an introduction to the natural history of western Ireland, particularly to the flora. They will also ensure that you get the most from the cultural interest and have a relaxing, enjoyable holiday.

Travel to Ireland

The holiday has been designed to allow for different ways of travelling to Lisdoonvarna. You can **fly** to Ireland or get the **train/ferry**. **Flying to Shannon** is one option and we can include a flight if you wish or you can book your own. We can arrange local transfers (shared with others if practical). Flight options include: Aer Lingus from Heathrow or Edinburgh, Ryan Air from Gatwick, Stansted or Manchester. There are more options if you **fly to Dublin** and you can then get take the pleasant train journey across Ireland to Ennis or Galway and we can arrange for a transfer from either of these (or you can take the local bus). You can get the **train and ferry to Dublin** (via Holyhead) from your local station and combined train/ferry tickets can be purchased at reasonable prices. A good guest house in Dublin can be recommended if needed. **Please discuss the travel options with us.**

Passports

You must have a valid passport for this trip. If travelling by ferry, other identification might be sufficient - please check. Visas are not required by holders of UK/EU passports.

TO BOOK

Contact us to check availability and reserve a place. Complete the Booking Form and send to Sunvil Holidays (CAA-ATOL Licence 808, ABTA V6218), our tour operator, with your deposit. All details about booking are given in the Booking Pack.

DEPOSIT £350 PER PERSON BALANCE DUE BY 8/3/2018

INCLUDED: Five nights accommodation (bed and breakfast). Five evening meals at local restaurants. Transfer to and from Ballinalacken Castle for one evening dinner. Transport for excursions as described in itinerary. Services of leaders.

NOT INCLUDED: Travel to Lisdoonvarna. Lunches. Entrances to visitor centres/historic sites (optional). Gratuities. Travel insurance.

EXTENSION INCLUDED Bed & breakfast on the extra 2 days. **NOT INCLUDED** Dinner, lunch, any excursions e.g Aran Islands (c 25-35 euros to Inisheer)

WILDLIFE TRAVEL

**The Manor House, Broad Street,
Great Cambourne, Cambridge CB23 6DH**



Tel: **01954 713575** email: **wildlifetravel@wildlifebcn.org**

www.wildlife-travel.co.uk

*Directors: Christine Donnelly, Brian Eversham, Philip Precey, Michael Russell, Tim Upson
Wildlife Travel Ltd. Reg. No 2237697; (for Registered Charity numbers, please contact us)*

Front: Poul nabrone dolmen; bloody cranesbill; limestone pavement; *Dactylorhiza* hybrid marsh-orchid.
Inside: limestone pavement; frog orchid; the Cliffs of Moher; seabirds on the stacks; Kilfenora; Slieve Carran; thrift; hazel woodland and well; Burren rose; fly orchid; Mullach Mor; mountain avens; Inisheer