

Ireland ride report. By Tommy Smith

On the day before the actual Wild Atlantic Way ride began , we took a short warmup ride to the Wicklow Mountains just south of Dublin. The roads were great and the scenery was spectacular. Wicklow Gap is only 1558 ft but high for Ireland. There we explored the Ballinastoe Woods.

Day 1.

This was a get to the starting point of The Wild Atlantic Way route that begins in Kinsale. We left Trim that morning in the rain with Drew leading. The tour company has provided a pre programmed route in our GPS to our hotel. However we had an off tour side excursion planned on the way to stop at the Jameson distillery. We got a late start due to Terrie wanting to exchange a t-shirt, and Drew's Cardo not connected to any of us after he paired it to the Navi 6. After that was all sorted we took off. At our first stop Drew decided we would not make our 5:45 appointment at the Jameson distillery and made an executive decision to turn off the preloaded route and just plop a course straight to the distillery with avoid tolls in the Navigation unit. Now Drew was only listening to the voice commands and not paying a lot of attention to the highlighted route on the screen. We started hitting the roundabouts and oh my. Then we got to the first of several construction sites right where we need to turn and the road was closed. This is when the fun really began. He tried to reroute and it would take us right back in a big circle to where the road was closed. After several mistakes I said let me lead. I put the address in mind without the avoid tolls and after paying two euros in tolls we arrive at the distillery an hour early. The tasting at the distillery was great and we really enjoyed it. It's the most visited place in Ireland. Now our hotel was only 45 minutes away but there was more construction and also a traffic accident that turned that into an hour and half trip. We got to our hotel just before they closed the kitchen for the night and were able to get a great meal. What a long day but we made it.

Day2.

Well I am now the official leader. We left the hotel about 9:00 am on a beautiful 62 degree morning. The high temperature today was a balmy 65 degrees. We rode through several seaside towns and villages. The landscape is spectacular. We stopped in Baltimore for a coffee and short break. We then continued to the Mizen Head peninsula. Mizen Head is the southernmost pint of Ireland. We had a great lunch by the bay before continuing. Next was the Beara Peninsula and the very scenic Healey Pass. Unbelievable twistie's! We took a short bathroom stop and Drew had booked a massage for Terrie at 5:00 pm at our hotel so he again made the decision to stop the pre plan route and navigate straight to the hotel so I did the same. 500 ft after we left the stop he turned up a pig trail and my navigation said go straight. I yelled out no that I was not going up that. Turns out it was too narrow for him to turn around. After we waited 10 minutes for him to turn around we went on. The next pass was Molls Gap and onto Ladies view in Killarney National Park. Part of this route was a short stretch of the Ring of Kerry. We got to the hotel about 4:30 and no Drew and Terrie. We checked into the hotel and took our things to the room. I then went back to the bike to get a few things and there they were checking in. It was 4:55 so Terrie went straight to her 5:00 pm massage in her riding gear. They made it. At the bar later he told me about the farms he had ridden through on single track and the farmer waving at them. All is well that ends well. We had a great meal and drinks afterwards in a pub with live music. Can't wait to see what tomorrow brings.















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Day 3
Ireland tour day 3.

Oh my goodness. Everyone needs to save their money and book a flight to Ireland. I have been touring the world for 47 years and have found the most beautiful, mystic, amazing, in fact words can't express and pictures can't show it, place on earth. I have ridden much better motorcycle roads but none that looks like this one.

It was misting but not raining when we pulled out of Killarney about 9:00 am on our way to Dingle. Shortly afterwards we turned down a road that said to The Gap of Dunloe. Then the beauty showed herself to us. Riding above 10 to 15 mph we wove our way up the mountain twisting and turning in first

gear. The mist hovered over the peaks as the rocks and streams showed themselves to us. Sheep were frolicking and crawling around the hillside. I had died and gone to heaven. I soaked in every moment and just couldn't believe my eyes. Once we reached the summit we stopped and looked back on our ascent to the top of the most beautiful place on this planet. At the summit there was a sign that said Welcome to the Black Valley, that laid ahead of us. As I stood there reflecting on what I had just seen it hit me. There is no place left on earth for me to see. I can't imagine there is anywhere on earth that could be better than this.

Well the road goes on and so must we. As we worked our way down into the Black Valley the rain picked up and continued all the way to our hotel. We stopped at the ruins of the Staigue Fort on the Iverage peninsula. It was built during the late Iron Age. We then continued over Coomakista Pass. After that we continued to a bridge that took us to Valeria Island. After touring the island we took a short ferry ride back to the mainland and stopped at O'Neil's Seafood Bar for lunch.

The next phase of the Ring of Kerry took us along the Mountain Stage with superb views towards the Dingle Peninsula. We rode along it's southern shore past Inch Beach.

We arrived at our hotel just before 4:00 pm. After a well deserved hot shower we hit the pub for a celebration of the day. After a great meal at The Chart House on the Mall we stopped at another pub on our way back to our hotel to relax and rest up for tomorrow.

Tomorrow we continue up the coast to Ballyvaughan. I don't know what to expect but I don't believe I will ever be as touched and moved as I was today at The Gap of Dunloe.

Once you get your money saved up go online to Limonrock Bike Tours and book the 8 night, 7 day motorcycle tour of The Wild Atlantic Way. It will be the best money you have ever spent.



Ireland day 4 ride report.

Today was a sunny 62 degrees as we climbed aboard our bikes In route to Ballyvaughan for the evening. As we left Dingle we our climb up the Conor Pass. It was a beautiful twistie road with great views of the surrounding mountains. Once we dropped down into the valley below it was primarily flat straight roads through farmland for the next 40 miles or so. We finally arrived in Tarbert where we took a ferry across the Shannon Estuary. The Shannon is the largest river in The British Isles.

Once across the river we continue our ride through cattle ranches until we arrive at the LoopHead lighthouse. Afterwards we had lunch right on the beach. I couldn't believe what I saw there. The beach is a rocky surface and the temperature was about 60 degrees with a 50 mph wind. There on that beach was a lady in a bathing suit sunbathing. These people!

The rest of the day we rode through small villages along the ocean until we arrived at The Kilkee Cliffs. These Cliffs are not on the normal tourist route and not many people were there. These cliffs have no safety barriers and you could easily fall off. In fact there were several small crosses along the edge. They are at least 500 feet or taller. There was one guy there trying to fish off the side. I don't know how his rig could hold that much line.

After we left the most beautiful cliffs in route to the most famous cliffs, The Cliffs of Moher we were zipping down the road through cow pastures when I saw an American flag along with an Ireland flag. As we got to them it was the entrance to Trump International Golf Club. It's about 10 miles outside any town. Didn't see anything other than the entrance. In the next town it was a tourist center with a golf course in town with a lot of people.

Our final stop of the day was the Cliffs of Moher. Don't waist your time. It's a tourist trap with shops and a visitor center. Cost \$10.00 euros each to get in. You can't get within 20 ft of the edge. Probably a dozen tour buses in the parking lot. The cliffs themselves are smaller and not a long as the free to visit and no people , Kilkee Cliffs.

We ended our day in Ballyvaughan with a few drinks and a great meal. Another great day of riding through a beautiful country.







Ireland ride report day 5 I think.

Today's ride took us through more beautiful country side into the bog's where they were harvesting peat moss. We reached Roundstone a nice seaside town about 12:30 and stopped at a pub for lunch. After lunch we walked through their little farmers market. I purchased an hand made Baileys ice cream. Diane purchased a hand made wool sweater. We both got what we wanted.

Once back on the road we took the Atlantic Sky Road. Wow what a beautiful sight the sea and islands were from on high. After that we traveled to the Kylemore Abbey where we took a short break and look around.

The final leg of our ride took us through Killarney Harbor which is Ireland's only fjord and gatekeeper to the Doolough Pass with more splendid views. Shortly thereafter we arrived in Westport our destination for the evening. It's a great little town with lots of shops and pubs. Had another great meal to end the day.

All in all another good day of riding. Tomorrow we may just sleep in and make a late start.









Ireland ride report day 6.

We decided to make today a short ride and not follow the tour plan. We slept late enjoying the morning in the beautiful town of Westport. We then programmed our navigation to take us to the northern seaside village of Enniscrone. We arrived early in the afternoon and managed to take a walk on the beach. There was a surfboard school there teaching several students the fine art of surfing in freezing cold water on a windy 60 degree day.

After several drinks and dinner we are calling it an early night to rest up for our final riding day in Ireland.

Tomorrow we will be riding through the Irish heartland back to the Trim Castle hotel for our final night before returning home. Once again we are not taking the tour companies pre programmed route. We have a must do side trip. You see Diane's maiden name is O'Bannon and in the early 1500's the O'Bannon clan built a home, but it has a terrible past. Leap Castle is known as the most haunted castle in all of Ireland. This place has a lot of blood shed over its history. To learn more look up leapcastle.net The castles originally Irish name is Leim Ui Bhanain meaning 'Leap of the O'Bannons'. Legend has it that two O'Bannon brothers were contesting the chieftainship of their clan. The only way to settle this argument was a display of strength and bravery. They were to both jump off the rocky outcrop where the castle was to be built. The survivor won the honor and right to be Chieftain. Thus the castle was built, fueled by blood and death. Now the castle became the home of the more powerful and warring O'Carroll clan. I am not sure how long the O'Bannon clan lived there. The O'Carrolls lived there until 1642 when an English soldier named John Darby took it from them. The Darbys inhabited Leap Castle from 1642 until its burning in 1922. As you can see much blood has been spilled at this castle of the centuries. So ghost hunting we will go tomorrow. If this is my last ride report you may never know what happens tomorrow.



















