

Spring Gathering 2020
Hosted by Wayfarers Hiking
Club



Friday March 27th – Sunday March 29th 2020

The Wayfarers Hiking Club 1970-2020

The Wayfarers Hiking Club is this year celebrating 50 years of hiking and as part of our year of celebrations we are proud to have been selected as the host club for the Mountaineering Ireland's Spring Gathering 2020.

Our founding member Mary Solan led the hike which evolved into the Wayfarers Hiking Club in October 1970, from this small beginning we have become one of the larger hiking clubs in the region with 240 members. Members come from across Dublin and further afield, four hikes are organised each weekend varying in difficulty and duration to suit all of our member's abilities.

The club members are environmentally aware, we follow the leave no trace principles, we encourage carpooling and are conscious of our responsibility in the area of conservation.

Club members are encouraged to undertake Mountain Skills training and some of our most experienced club members have developed a two day Navigation training programme which they deliver to members.

The club plans regular trips away over the long weekends in Ireland and celebrates Christmas with a whiskey hike and a party. The club barbeque every August in Glenmalure is one of the highlights of the summer.

Many of our members take part in challenge hikes throughout the year and the annual Blackstairs Challenge hike which is organised by the club is held in May each year in Co. Carlow.

The Wayfarers have put together a hiking programme for the Spring Gathering weekend which includes some of our favourite hikes in the West Wicklow area.

We look forward to meeting all the participants and to introducing you to routes which may be new to you.



Spring Gathering 2020

This year we have the pleasure of The Wayfarers Hiking Club, one of our larger long-established clubs to host this year's Spring Gathering in conjunction with their 50th Anniversary. The gathering will be based out of The Avon which is ideally situated in Blessington, Co Wicklow situated on the shores of Blessington Lakes and beside the Wicklow Mountains. The accommodation is based from the lodges with breakfast served in the main function area. Members of Mountaineering Ireland can either avail of a room at €55 pp per night including B&B or can avail of a full house for €300 per house a night based on 6 people sharing or €70 per person a night single occupancy (room to themselves) including breakfast. The Avon also provides meeting room space as well as a large dining area for the Saturday night dinner. **Please let the hotel know you are with the Mountaineering Ireland Spring Gathering at the time of booking to avail of this special rate. Rooms are booking out fast so be sure to book early.**

The weekend will start with registration from 6.30pm in the lobby area of the Avon. The welcome talk will take place from 8.00pm. Saturday, sees a full programme of activities including walks in and around the Wicklow Mountains. The Mountaineering Ireland AGM will take place at The Avon with AGM registration from 5.30pm. There will be refreshments offered beforehand. The Members' Forum, like the AGM, is for all members and will take place immediately after our AGM. The Members' Forum is a key part of Mountaineering Ireland's democratic process where clubs and members can put forward items to be discussed, and this is often the catalyst for further examination or for a campaign or action to be launched. All members are encouraged to attend this forum and you are invited to submit items for discussion by email to info@mountaineering.ie. Saturday evening finishes off with a dinner in the hotel itself.

Sunday morning will have a variety of workshops commencing at 10:00. Again, please book your choice of workshop online as places are limited.

The Avon, Blessington, Co. Wicklow. Tel: +353 (0) 45 900 670 Email: info@theavon.ie



Alternative Accommodation in the area:

Although we would encourage as many as possible to stay in the Avon, it may not suit everyone. Please find below some alternative ideas:

Guesthouses/B & B's

Anglers Rest

Bishopsland, Ballymore Eustace, Co. Kildare.

Tel; (045) 864 584

Website: <https://the-anglers-rest.business.site/>

Tulfarris Hotel & Golf Resort

Blessington Lakes

Blessington

Wicklow

Ireland

W91 EE95

E-mail: info@tulfarris.com

Tel: 045 867 600

Lakeview Lodge Bed & Breakfast

Boystown, Blessington, Co. Wicklow

Tel: 087 386 8070

The Wicklow Mountains

The Wicklow Mountains form the largest continuous upland area in the Republic of Ireland. They occupy the whole centre of County Wicklow and stretch outside its borders into the counties of Dublin, Wexford and Carlow providing wide ranging and challenging walking routes to suit all abilities.

Coach transport and car pooling will be available from the Avon to the start and finish points of all walks. The walks will be taking place in and around the Wicklow Mountains National Park, <https://www.wicklowmountainsnationalpark.ie> an area of outstanding beauty on the door step of our base in Blessington. There are walks for all abilities and all will be led by members of the Wayfarers Hiking Club who are very familiar with the area and will be ready with local stories and insights! Please read through the descriptions of the walks outlined below before you start the online registration process as you will be asked for your activity selection when registering online.



Programme of Events:

Friday March 27th

Why not start the weekend with a short informal walk with members of The Wayfarers. When registering online please select “additional options” to let leaders know you will be attending. Details of the walk to follow.

18:30 – Registration in the lobby area of the Avon. There is a bar area in the hotel to grab something to eat when you arrive. If you cannot register on the Friday night please contact ruth@mountaineering.ie.

20:00 – Welcome from Paul Kellagher President of Mountaineering Ireland and PJ Howell (Wayfarer’s 50th Anniversary Committee).

Followed by:

Prepublication Launch of “Irish Peaks” a large hard-cover book with beautiful images and detailed route descriptions from mountain areas across the island, the majority of these submitted by Mountaineering Ireland members. Orders will be taken on the night and members can avail of a discount.

Talk: The Wayfarers Hiking Club - 1970 - 2020 - Past and Present: Mary Solan and PJ Howell

Mary Solan led the hike which evolved into the Wayfarers Hiking Club on Sunday 18th October, 1970. Mary has been a member of the club since its inception, she has also been an active volunteer with Mountaineering Ireland for many years. She was the chair of the first Hillwalking Committee and in that capacity, represented Mountaineering Ireland at the European Ramblers Association, was the first Access and Conservation Officer of the then FMCI in the early eighties and was one of the early members of Mountain Meitheal. Mary will talk about the origins of the Wayfarers Hiking Club and the hiking environment in the 1970s. PJ Howell has been a member of the Wayfarers since 2007 and was club chairperson for the past three years. PJ will outline how the club continues to evolve and grow, and the clubs plans to celebrate 50 years in action.

Saturday March 28th

A variety of walks, climbs and workshops will be departing from the Avon. Please note that packed lunches (at €8.00 each) are available from the hotel but must be ordered before 8pm on Friday evening (please book with hotel at the time of check in). Please ensure you have walking gear for all weather with you, including hiking boots with good ankle support and gaiters as the terrain on some of the walks is steep and can be challenging.

Choose from:

Walk 1.

Glendalough Circuit Hike - Start Time @ 9am

Glendalough Upper Car Park > SH677 > Camaderry > Turlough Hill > Glenealo > SH637 > Mullacor > Derrybawn > Tracks > Car Park

Distance: 19 km. Height Gain 1050m: Duration: 5.25 hrs.

Walk 2.

The Lakes and King's River – Start time @ 9am

Start Point: Ballinagee Bridge O 036 024 Car Park > St Kevin's Way > Wicklow Gap > Fair Mtn > Turlough Hill > Lough Firrib > Spot 702 > Conavalla > Three Lakes > Table Mtn > Carrig > Asbawn Brook > Kings River > Car Park

Distance: 22kmm. Height Gain: 820m Duration: 6 hrs.

Walk 3.

West Wicklow Highlights - Start @ 9am

Annalecka Bridge > Forest Track > Silsean 698m > Moanbane > Billy Byrnes Gap > Mullaghcleevaun West 849m > Barnacullian > Tonelagee > Glashaboy Bridge > St Kevins Way > Annalecka Bridge

Distance: 22km. Height Gain: 1200m Duration: 6.5 hrs.

Walk 4.

Ballyknockan Circuit – Start @ 10am

Ballyknockan > Road > Pound Lane > Black Hill > Billy Byrnes Gap > Moanbane > Silsean > Ballyknockan

Distance: 15km. Height Gain: 720m Duration: 4.5 hrs.

Walk 5.

In the Footsteps of Art O'Neill - Start Time 9am

Ballinagee Bridge O 036 024 - Car Park > St Kevin's Way > Gleenremore Brook > Art's Cross > Lough Firrib > Turlough Hill > Wicklow Gap > St Kevin's Way > Car Park

Distance: 14 km. Height Gain: 1080m Duration: 5 hrs.

Walk 6.

Mullaghcleevaun Ridge – Moderate – Start @ 9am

Annalecka Bridge > Forest Track > Barnacullian 714m > Mullaghcleevaun East 795m > Mullaghcleevaun West 849m > Glenbride > St Kevins Way > Annalecka Bridge

Distance: 19km. Height Gain: 750m Duration: 5.75 hrs.

Walk 7.

Circuit of Glendalough Short Version – Start @ 10am

Glendalough Upper Car Park > Camaderry > Turlough Hill > Genealo Valley > Glendalough Upper Car Park

Distance: 12km. Height Gain: 625m Duration: 4 hrs.

Walk 8.

Lacken Circuit – Start @10 am

Start Point Lacken Church Grid: O 011 109> Pound Lane > Black Hill > Ballynultagh Gap > Sorrell > Forest Corner > Lacken

Distance: 13km. Height Gain: 600m Duration: 4 hrs.

Environmental Walk

A hike around the Kilbride area of northwest Wicklow visiting some of the most significant archaeological sites in the area with retired archaeologist and former member of the Wayfarers, Con Manning.

Our route will follow the southern boundary of the Kilbride rifle range to Seefin where we will view a passage tomb which dates from c. 3,300 BC. This is a very fine example with its full passage, some decorated side stones and a fine burial chamber with a collapsed roof. We will also visit the cairn on Seefingan and continue to Seahan which also has cairns and passage tombs. Con will discuss the original uses of these monuments, their importance and their vulnerability. In the course of the hike we will also look at flora and fauna, talk about the role of Wicklow Mountains National Park and we will discuss how walkers and climbers can play in helping to care for this part of the Wicklow / Dublin Mountains.

Con (Conleth) Manning retired in 2017 from his role as Senior Archaeologist with the National Monuments Service, with whom he worked for 38 years. Con has a particular interest in medieval archaeology and architecture and has directed excavations at many sites around the country including Clonmacnoise, the Rock of Cashel, Roscrea Castle and Dublin Castle. He is a past president of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland and of the County Kildare Archaeological Society.

Distance: 9km, height gain 530m, duration 6hrs

Training Workshop Scrambling Skills - Start @ 9:30

Our training Officer will be conducting a scrambling skills course which will cover the use of ropes, and climbing equipment to protect on steeper scrambling terrain. Ratio 1 – 4.

Mountaineering Ireland AGM

The AGM will be on Saturday evening. We hope that this will encourage good attendance and also allow for a longer programme of activities on Sunday morning. Mountaineering Ireland encourages all clubs to send a minimum of two delegates to the AGM. Individual members also have voting rights.

17.00 Meeting of Honorary and Individual members, if required.
17.30 - 18:00 Registration for Mountaineering Ireland AGM, Avon Hotel, (Refreshments Available)

18.00 Mountaineering Ireland AGM – Avon Hotel

Member's Forum The Members' Forum will follow the AGM, like the AGM, this is for all members. The Members' Forum is a key part of Mountaineering Ireland's democratic process where clubs and members can put forward items to be discussed, and this is often the catalyst for further examination or for a campaign or action to be launched. All members are encouraged to attend this forum and you are invited to submit items for discussion by email to info@mountaineering.ie.

20.00 Dinner in Avon

Sunday March 29th

There will be a variety of workshops available from 10:00 on Sunday morning. Please select when booking online by clicking on **'additional items'**.

1. **Club Training Workshop**

This workshop will be a mixture of indoor learning and practical outdoor sessions. Initially we will look at some suggested models for in-club training and what resources are available from Mountaineering Ireland to support club training. The outdoor session will focus on practical tips for teaching navigation, movement and leadership along with how to introduce training into your regular walks.

2. **Yoga for Mountaineers**

1.5 hour Yoga for Mountaineers, class led by Wayfarer and Yoga instructor Pauline McCarthy.

Pauline will lead a class and offer advice and guidance to Mountaineers so that they can get the most from their Yoga practice.

Please bring along your own mat if you have one, some mats will be available.

3. **Upland Birdwatching and Conservation Workshop led by Declan Whelan and Ann Fitzpatrick.**

Ann and Declan will join forces in this workshop to improve participant's knowledge of the importance of conservation in preserving our upland heritage. Declan will introduce us to the bird species to look out for in the hills and will take the group outdoors to demonstrate

As always, there is the option to walk or climb independently on Sunday morning.

13.30 Gathering Ends