

HORSE & HOUND PROMOTION

A typical day

AT Island View Riding Stables in Co Sligo, you can create your own timetable. Guests are either housed in local, friendly bed and breakfasts, or can stay in the establishment's self-catering accommodation.

After a traditional Irish breakfast, your riding ability will be assessed and you will be assigned a suitable horse. Island View has a wide range of mounts to suit every ability and every size, from quiet children's ponies to Connemaras, well-mannered hunters and gypsy cobs.

A day's trek on the Atlantic trail lasts between three and six hours. Lunch is either a picnic or a meal in a local pub along the way, before continuing along the scenic trails to either the islands, the beach or the mountains, depending on which trek you have chosen that day.

A mix and match holiday can combine lessons from experienced instructors with treks in the morning or afternoon for however long you choose, before relaxing in the evening in local pubs or visiting the county town of Sligo.



Cantering through the surf with Island View Riding Stables

Riding across the Emerald Isle

Ireland's beautiful scenery lends itself so well to horseriding, so why not take your next holiday on horseback?

THIS year, holidays close to home are definitely more popular. But just because you're not jetting off to the Caribbean doesn't mean your holiday has to be spent wedding the garden. Why not take the opportunity to explore Ireland's west coast, famous for its dramatic and beautiful scenery.

Craggy mountains, rolling hills, stunning coastlines – the landscape is breathtaking, and how better to feel close to nature than by riding

through it on horseback. Riding is a way of life in rural Ireland, and as the country becomes ever more popular as a tourist destination, equestrian centres have become very well set-up to cater for guests. Most popular are the beach rides in this part of Ireland – gallop along miles of deserted golden sand, hearing only the cries of the gulls and the crash of the waves.

If your idea of fun is to combine exhilarating rides along miles of deserted, sandy beaches with evenings of pampering and soothing, then head for the Westport Woods Hotel & Spa in Westport, Co Mayo. Situated on the stunning west coast of Ireland, not far from Galway and Knockairports, the hotel specialises in long beach treks at low tide on Murrisk and Bertra beaches. Imagine galloping through the surf, the wind ruffling your hair, with miles of unspoilt landscape surrounding you.

Westport Woods also offers woodland and mountain treks on well-schooled horses where you'll be amazed by the outstanding scenery.

Moycullen Riding Centre, just a few miles from Galway City in the magnificent surroundings of the Connemara countryside, also offers a variety of

treks for individuals, couples, families and groups through the quiet lanes and the gorse-sewn hillsides of the region.

Further north, head to Island View Riding Stables in Co Sligo. Situated on the Atlantic coast, Island View is a small family farm that has grown into an equestrian centre with "old world charm". Here you can go trekking to the family's uninhabited private island, Connors Island, ride across the shallows to Streedagh beach before kicking on into a gallop along the sands, or drink in the unspoilt views of Donegal Bay and Classeabon Castle. This is a site rich in history – three Spanish Armada ships were wrecked here on the Black Rock in 1588.

Moving up the coastline, Donegal Equestrian Holidays offers rides ranging from an hour to a full day from its BHS and AIRE-approved facilities near Bundoran on Donegal Bay. There are indoor and outdoor arenas as well as a full cross-country course – and if you want to make your holiday more active, why not combine riding with surfing or pilates.

There are 1000 square acres of rolling sand dunes on the doorstep, as well as a 10km beach you'll