



Hillwalkers Club

Sept - Nov 2016

<http://www.hillwalkersclub.com/>

# THE HILLWALKER



Girls on tour in the Picos Photo –Carina Fitzgerald

## In this edition

Hike programme September - November 2016	2
<i>The pick-up points</i>	3
Club news and events	9
<i>Environmental news</i>	12
May trip to Scotland	13
<i>On the Camino Portugues</i>	18
Ring of Imaal report	22
<i>La Aventura de Picos</i>	25
October Bank Holiday weekend	29

## Committee 2015/16

Chairman	Russell Mills
Treasurer	Ita O'Hanlon
Secretary	Mel O'Hara
Sunday Hikes Coordinator	Simon More
Environmental Officer	Adriana Alvarez Sanchez
Membership Secretary	Jim Barry
Club Promoter	Eugene Dudley
Administrator	Ita O'Hanlon
Club Social Coordinator	Eugene Dudley
Training Officer	Russell Mills
Newsletter Editor	Mel O'Hara

### Special thanks to:

Webmaster

Matt Geraghty

## HIKE PROGRAMME Sept 2016 – Nov 2016

---

**MEET:** Corner of Burgh Quay and Hawkins St

**DEPART:** Sundays at 10.00 am (*unless stated otherwise*), or earlier if it is full.

**TRANSPORT:** Private bus (*unless stated otherwise*)

**COST:** €12.00 (*unless stated otherwise*)

---

**2nd pick-up point:** *On the outward journey, the bus will stop briefly to collect walkers at the pick-up point. Should the bus be full on departure from Burgh Quay, this facility cannot be offered.*

**Return drop-off point:** *On the return journey, where indicated, the bus will stop near the outward pick-up point to drop off any hikers. We regret this is not possible on all hikes.*

*If you wish to avail of the 2<sup>nd</sup> pick-up point, it advisable to contact the hike leader or someone else who will definitely be on the hike, to let them know.*

---

## GENERAL HIKE NOTES

**PARTICIPATION** Mountaineering is an activity with a danger of personal injury or death. Participants should be aware of and accept these risks. People who take part in our club activities do so at their own risk and are responsible for their own actions and involvement.

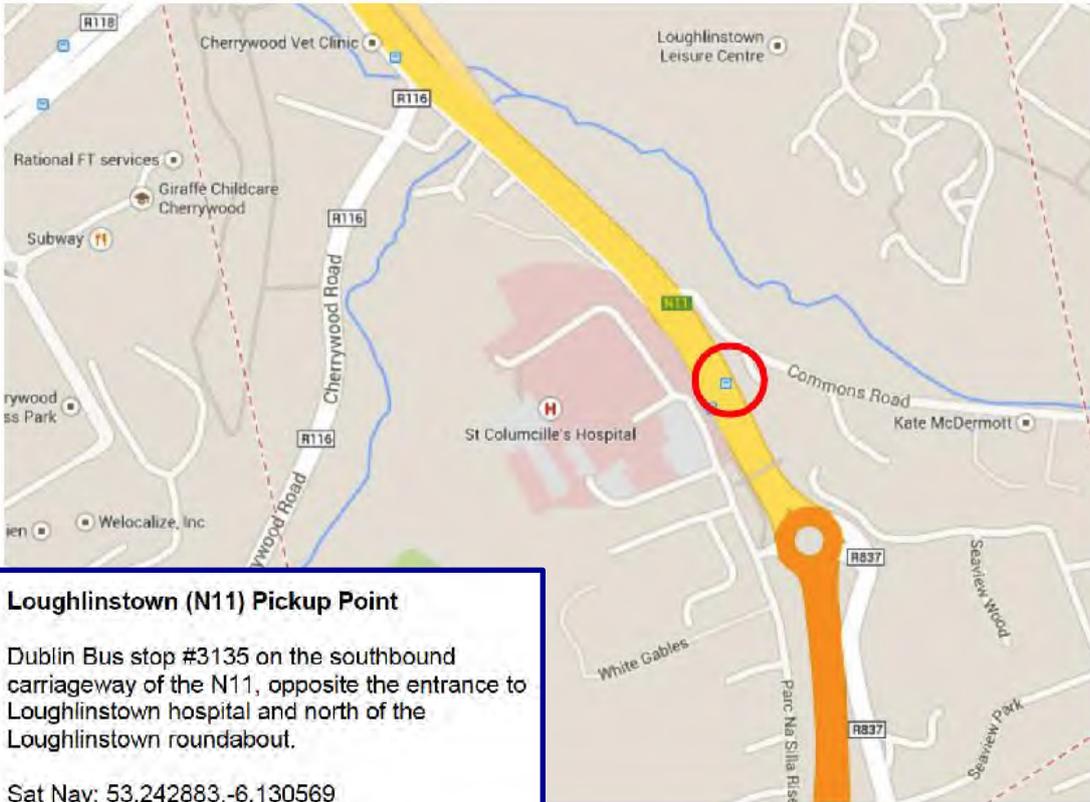
**CO-ORDINATION** If necessary, tickets are given out on Sundays to ensure that participants reserve a bus place as they arrive.

**LEADER** The leader has the right to refuse anyone who is not adequately equipped (e.g., without appropriate boots, rainwear, food, torch, hat, gloves, etc.). The leader may alter the route from that described in the program. The leader sets the pace of the hike and walkers are expected to obey the leader's instructions at all times.

**EQUIPMENT** It is essential to bring good rain gear (both jacket and over-trousers) and to leave cotton t-shirts and jeans at home! Boots must be sturdy with proper ankle support and a rigid non-slip sole such as Vibram.

**WALKING STICKS AND RUCKSACKS** Remember that walking sticks and rucksacks cannot be brought onto the bus and must be stowed away in the boot during the journey.

# The pick-up points



**Loughlinstown (N11) Pickup Point**  
Dublin Bus stop #3135 on the southbound carriageway of the N11, opposite the entrance to Loughlinstown hospital and north of the Loughlinstown roundabout.  
Sat Nav: 53.242883,-6.130569

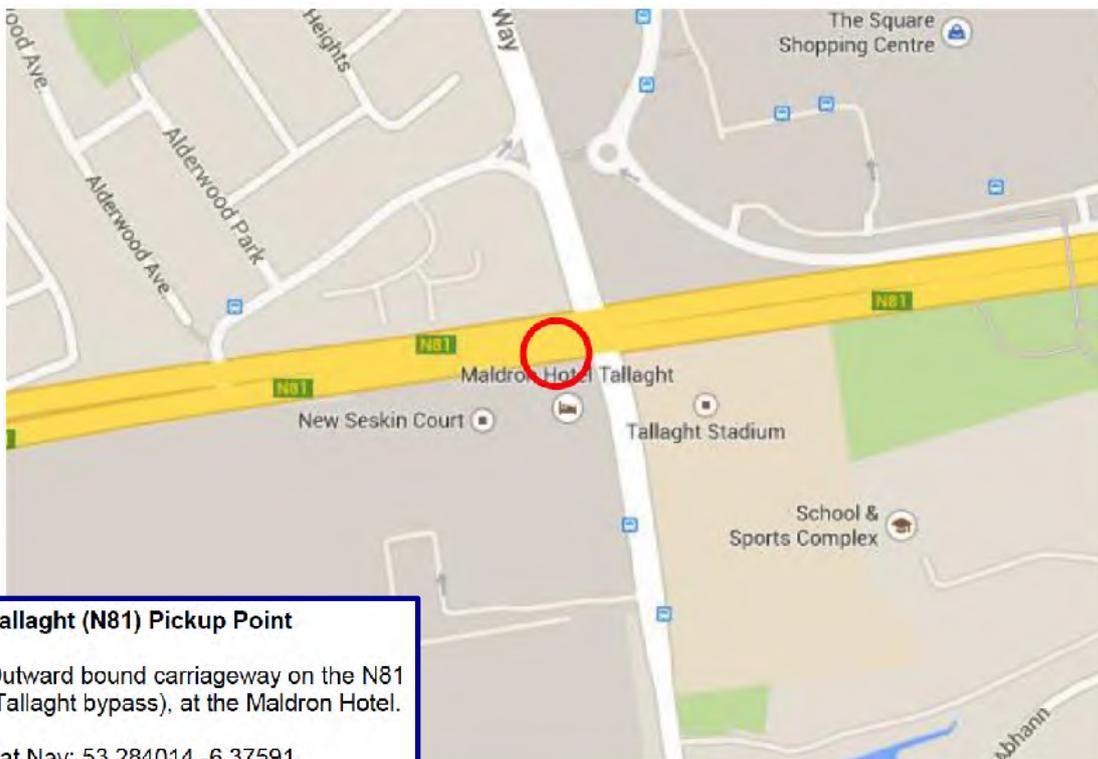


**Rathfarnham Castle (R115) Pickup Point**  
Dublin Bus stop #1304 on the southbound carriageway of the R115, close to Rathfarnham Castle and opposite Butterfield Ave.  
Sat Nav: 53.29935,-6.283815

**Swords (R132) Pickup Point**

Dublin Bus stop #5074 on the northbound carriageway of the R132 (Swords bypass), south of the Swords Road - Malahide Road roundabout, adjacent to a footbridge and close to Pavillion Shopping Centre.

Sat Nav: 53.453170, -6.215920.



**Tallaght (N81) Pickup Point**

Outward bound carriageway on the N81 (Tallaght bypass), at the Maldron Hotel.

Sat Nav: 53.284014, -6.37591

## ★★ **Introductory hard hike** ★★

The Hillwalkers Club offers an Introductory Hike, usually on one Sunday per month. Guests are welcome to join us on this hike, as long as they provide their name, address and contact details for our records, which will be taken on the day of the hike. Unless guests have their own personal hiking insurance, they are not insured. There is no need to book a place in advance, just turn up on the relevant Sunday morning. Guests can come on one hike without becoming a member of the club, but after that they must join the club.

Even though the name of these hikes is 'Introductory Hike', they should not be considered to be an introduction to hiking, but rather as an introduction to the Hillwalkers Club and its hillwalking activities. Therefore, participants need to have a good level of personal fitness and, ideally, have some prior experience of hillwalking.

All intending participants should be aware that hillwalking and mountaineering are activities with a danger of personal injury or even death. By walking with the club, they are aware of and shall accept these risks. Moreover, they acknowledge that they wish to participate in club activities in a voluntary capacity and that they shall be responsible for their own actions and involvement. Please note that as guests of the club, they do not enjoy personal accident insurance, which is otherwise offered to club members through Mountaineering Ireland. Further details are available from Mountaineering Ireland ([www.mountaineering.ie/membersandclubs/Insurance/default.aspx](http://www.mountaineering.ie/membersandclubs/Insurance/default.aspx))

*For further enquiries contact 086 356 3843*

---

**For Sunday hike leaders, the contact people for Mullally's Coaches are:**

**- Austin O'Hagan, 086 466 4680 - James Mullally, 086 383 7495**

---

## Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> September

**Leader :** Udo Sap

**2nd pick-up & return drop-off point:**

Maldron Hotel, Tallaght

**Route:** Rathnabo \* Sorrell Hill \*  
Ballynultagh Gap \* Black Hill \* Billy Byrne's  
Gap \* Moanbane \* Silesawn \* Ballyknockan  
car park

**Distance:** 18 kms **Ascent:** 760 m

**Map:** OSI 56, East West Mapping  
(Wicklow Mountains West)

---

## Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> September

**Leader:** Dave McCann

**2nd pick-up & return drop-off point:**

Bus stop at Loughlinstown roundabout

**Route:**

Glasnamullen (O202090) \* Wicklow Way \*  
Pier Gates \* Luggala Valley \*  
Knocknacloghoge \* Corriganewman \*  
Cornagrinya Brook \* Military Road  
(O106055)

**Distance:** 16 km **Ascent:** 810 m

**Map:** OSI 56,  
East West Mapping (Wicklow Mountains  
West along with either The Dublin and North  
Wicklow Mountains or Wicklow East

---

## Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> September

**Leader:** Damien McDonald

**2nd pick-up & return drop-off point:**

Bus stop before roundabout at Loughlinstown

**Route:** Wicklow Gap \* Turlough Hill \*  
Lugduff \* Mullacor \* Derrybawn \*  
Glendalough

**Distance:** 19 km **Ascent:** 660 m

**Maps:** OSI 56,  
East West Mapping (Lugnaquilla &  
Glendalough )

---

## Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> October

**Leader :** Philip Hayden

**2nd pick-up point:**

Maldron Hotel, Tallaght **\*\*Different return\*\***

**Route:** Ballynultagh Gap \* Black Hill \*  
Mullaghcleevaun \* Mullaghcleevaun East  
Top \* Carrigshouk \* Kanturk \* Lough Dan \*  
Oldbridge

**Distance:** 18.5 kms **Ascent:** 790 m

**Map:** OSI 56 East West Mapping  
(Wicklow Mountains West)

---

## Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> October

### **\*\*Introductory Hard Hike\*\***

**Leader:** Tom Kenny

**2nd pick-up & return drop-off point:**  
Bus stop at Loughlinstown roundabout

**Route:** Drumgoff forest entrance –  
Carrawaystick - Corrigasleggaun -  
Lugnaquilla - Clohernagh - Arts Lough -  
Baravore

**Distance:** 18 km **Ascent:** 580 m

**Maps:** OSI 56, East West Mapping  
(Lugnaquilla & Glendalough)

---

## Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> October

**Leader:** Warren Lawless

**2nd pick-up & return drop-off point:**  
Bus stop at Loughlinstown roundabout

**Route:**  
Croaghanmoira \* Wicklow Way \*  
Carrawaystick \* Corrigasligaun \* (dropping  
down at saddle called Lough Gap on East-  
West map) \* Kelly's Lough \* Zig-Zags to  
Glenmalure.

**Distance:** 17 km **Ascent:** 650 m

**Map:** OSI 56 & 62 East West Mapping  
(Lugnaquilla & Glendalough)

---

---

## Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> October

**Leader:** Brian Madden

**2nd pick-up & return drop-off point:**  
Bus stop at Loughlinstown roundabout

**Route:** Moneystown Hill \* Lawler's Glen \*  
Round Hill \* Glenwood \* Cronybyrne \*  
Ballinastraw \* Carrick Mountain

**Distance:** 18 km **Ascent:** 630 m

**Maps:** OSI 50 & 56 East West Mapping  
(Dublin & North Wicklow Mountains)

---

## Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> October

**No Sunday Hike**

**Weekend away in Cahir**

**See Page 29**

---

---

**Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> November**

**\*\*Introductory Hard Hike\*\***

**Leader:** Mel O'Hara

**2nd pick-up & return drop-off point:**

Bus stop before roundabout at Loughlinstown

**Route:**

Wicklow Gap \* Tonelagee \* Brockaghs \*

Lead mines \* Camaderry East \* Glendalough

**Distance:** 14 km **Ascent:** 740 m

**Map:** OSI 56,

East West Mapping (Lugnaquilla &  
Glendalough or Wicklow Mountains West )

---

---

**Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> November**

**Leader :** Donal Finn

**2nd pick-up & return drop-off point:**

Maldron Hotel, Tallaght

**Route:** Oasis \* Carrigshouk \*

Mullaghcleevaun East Top \*

Mullaghcleevaun \* Billy Byrne Gap \*

Moanbane \* Silsean \* Ballyknocken

**Distance:** 15 kms **Ascent:** 700 m

**Map:** OS 56 East West Mapping ( Dublin  
Mountains West)

---

## Club news and events

---

### 2016 AGM

The AGM will be held on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> October  
at 20.00 in  
The Teacher's Club,  
36, Parnell Square West,  
Dublin 1

Agenda and nomination form for committee on page 11

### HELP WANTED

Looking for an opportunity to help your friends and hiking companions continue to enjoy the benefits of belonging to a friendly, vibrant and interesting hiking club ?

**PLEASE CONSIDER TAKING UP A PLACE ON  
THE CLUB COMMITTEE**

Committee meetings are typically held once every 2 months  
Please contact any committee member for information on any of the committee roles.

### Club membership

Applications for club membership for 2016 / 2017 will open on 1<sup>st</sup> October

Club membership can be taken out and renewed on the club website see

<http://www.hillwalkersclub.com/membership-application-form.php>

If you have any difficulty using this facility please contact

Membership Secretary, Jim Barry, [barryja@eircom.net](mailto:barryja@eircom.net)

A current Hillwalkers Club membership card is a requirement for participation in the Sunday hikes **NO CARD – NO HIKE**

*Guests may sample only one hike before taking out club membership*

## **Club news and events continued**

---

### **Bus fares**

Due to increases in bus company charges the bus hired by the club to transport hikers is losing money most weeks. The committee feels that this situation cannot continue indefinitely and that an increase in Sunday bus fares is inevitable. This matter will be discussed at the AGM on Thursday October 13th

### **Summer review**

The JB Malone Walk on 29<sup>th</sup> May was very enjoyable finishing with tea and chat in good weather at Knockree. The weather was not quite as kind on June 19<sup>th</sup> when we were on the Bog of Allen tour organised by Adriana but the day was very enjoyable nonetheless. The weather gods were smiling again for the ~50 people who attended the club barbeque organised by Eugene in Glencree on 9<sup>th</sup> July. The trip to the Picos organised by Inés and José was also graced with good weather. Thanks to Simon and the hike leaders involved there were several interesting “away day” hikes through the Summer also.

### **Looking ahead**

The committee is organising a weekend away over the Bank Holiday weekend. The weekend will be based in Cahir with opportunities for walking in the Galtys, Comeraghs and Knockmealdowns. See Page 29 for details.

The Christmas Party will be held on Saturday, December 10<sup>th</sup> in Glendalough with the Holly Hike scheduled for Sunday, December 18th

**Hillwalkers Club AGM**  
**8.00 p.m. on Thursday October 13<sup>th</sup> 2016**  
**The Teachers Club,**  
**36 Parnell Square West, Dublin 1**

**Agenda**

1. Welcome
2. Secretary's Report
3. Treasurer's Report
4. Sunday Hike Co-ordinators Report
5. Membership Secretary's report
6. Treasurer's Report
7. Club Promoter's report
8. Training Officer and Administrator's report
9. Social Co-ordinators' report
10. Environmental Officer's report
11. Newsletter Editor's report
12. Any other business / summary
13. 2016 committee nominations and approval
14. Meeting close

**Nomination Form for 2016 - 2017 Hillwalkers Club Committee**

I nominate .....for a position on the committee of the Hillwalkers club for the 2016 – 2017 membership year

Signature of Proposer .....

Signature of the Secunder.....

I accept the nomination

Signature of the Nominee .....

All the above signatories must be current members of the Hillwalkers Club

Please return completed form to club secretary,  
Mel O'Hara, Ardmore Road, Mullingar, Co Westmeath, ideally before 7<sup>th</sup> October 2016



## ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

Hi Hillwalkers,

First of all, I would like to thank everyone who came along to the Bog of Allen Centre. I hope you all enjoyed it despite the poor weather conditions. I believe the event was very informative, and has hopefully helped us all to be aware of the current issues our upland bogs are facing.

In this article, I would like to make an appeal for upland bird sightings. Unfortunately, some of these birds are no longer as abundant as in the past, with pressures from sheep farming, forestry, peat cutting and burning on the upland environment contributing to their decline.

- The familiar red grouse has suffered a 50% decline in range primarily due to habitat changes resulting from these pressures. The Wicklow uplands are an important habitat for the threatened Red Grouse. This species requires long old heather for cover and nesting as well as young heather on which to feed.



- The Peregrine Falcon, the fastest animal on earth, nests on the cliffs within the National Park and is the park's symbol. Peregrine falcons were almost extinct in the 50s and 60s due to the effects of the pesticide called DDT, which caused the female falcons to lay eggs with abnormally thin shells. The Irish population has recovered in recent years but they are still under threat. An attempt at poisoning a family with their chicks on Killiney hill was reported earlier this year.
- The Merlin-is the smallest of our falcons. In summer, the Wicklow uplands welcome a good population. Merlin preys on small birds such as pipits. This species nests in woodland edges, and hunts over the open bog and moorland.
- Meadow pipit- It is the most abundant upland bird and the preferred nursemaid of the cuckoo.
- Hen harrier- it is a summer resident and nests in open heather or young coniferous plantation.

It is important to report bird sightings in order to monitor bird populations and map where they occur. Recording provides valuable insight on the health of species as well as its range. You can submit your sightings to CEDAR (Centre for Environmental Data and Recording) or Birdwatch Ireland.

So guys bring your binoculars along in your walks and start recording! walkers could make a difference when it comes to help to conserve these birds. Familiarizing with the different species that inhabit the uplands, and appreciate their beauty is the way to start.

Adriana Alvarez Sanchez, Environmental Officer.

## May Trip to Scotland

*text by Warren Lawless*

The Editor's cajoling and legal threats have finally inspired me to write-up an incomprehensive account of the club's trip to Scotland in May of this year. One aspect of the trip was the especially cheap flights €30 in total for many of us. With luggage costing more than the flights, we speculated that it would be cheaper to bring an inflatable doll, dress it with all your excess hiking clothes and bring in onto the plane as a 'companion'

Having landed at Glasgow, the gang split into their car-teams ala Fast & Furious. All cars got to the rally and start points without drama [Don & Liz take note], though Tom and I had a moment of unease as we slowly realised that it wasn't the sun that was burning us up but our under-seat heaters. Handy after a rainy hike if you've got a wet behind, but not otherwise.



*View from The Pap of Glencoe*

Our first walk (14kms, 1230m) on Thursday, May 5<sup>th</sup>, was in fine, dry, bright weather and brought us up to a lovely col between two Munros overlooking the Bridge of Orchy: Beinn Dorain and Beinn an Dotaigh. Before starting to hike we held the 2016 Mel Room Raffle. This calm and fair means of allocating bed-space flies in the face of the good old, first come, first served, winner-takes-all approach the club has enjoyed for years. However, I will concede that Mel's method did throw up some eye-brow raising combinations, or rather almost, as good taste and decorum required Mel scupper some of the match-ups lest we become known as a swingers club. James, oh what might have been! One tradition was kept alive though: blatant committee corruption, as both O'Hara's managed to "win" a single room each! Mel at least was embarrassed enough by this swindle to offer his up (on some excuse of do-gooding).

As we set out for the first Munro, Eddie got cramp but was assailed with offers of water, a leg massage and a banana (!). He bravely soldiered on but eventually had to retire down. We were already a man down as Tom was recovering from a stomach bug, so it was 14 of us who approached the peak of Beinn Dorain (1076 m). En route we nearly lost Carina's bag to a snow slide, leading to a bit of unaccustomed sprinting on my part to retrieve it. As we neared the top of Beinn Dorain, the 5 newcomers to Scotland, Ann, Liz, Colm, Damien and Richard, took the lead and jointly claimed the honour of their first Munro. The rest of us joined in applause. It was a fine moment.

We descended back to the col where Mel gave the group the choice of the second Munro or the Bridge of Orchy Hotel. Eight of us took the chance at Beinn an Dotaigh. Here it should be categorically stated that Catherine did not flip-flop and was only seen hovering beside the hotel group "out of consideration for the driver". Whatever!

By end of day one the score was Falls: Liz 1 - Warren 2; Munros: Colm 1 - Damien 2.



*Shauna, Søren, James & Carina on Stob Diamh*

Our rooms turned out to be in charming little chalets at Onich and had previously been used by club members who have participated in the MCI Winter Skills Course (the "F.K was here" carved into the furniture was a giveaway). We were spread across four cosy 3 and 5 bed chalets, each named for local geography. Each chalet developed its own dynamic and routines. Thankfully domestic bliss seems to have reigned and there was no calls for Mel to re-run the room-allocation raffle. Tom, Catherine and myself had a nice system of table setting and boot-lace repair (me), shopping (Catherine/Tom), with always time for some tea and chat in the morning before meeting at the cars. As Tom and I carried out our chores, Catherine sipped her tea contentedly, saying "I like seeing men at work".

Carina was the mammy of chalet #2 and had Richard, Eddie, Søren & Terry all organised in their assigned tasks, with "Cafe Carina" doing fabulous sandwiches

Shauna, Liz, Ann, Colm & Damien in chalet #1 did fab Italian meals. Fame of their cooking quickly spread and they were even graced with a visit from famed gastronome James Cooke, whose 5-star review of *Chez Colm* will be appearing in Irish Food Monthly. Richard confessed to wanting to jump ship when he saw the breakfast cooking in Chalet #1. However, one man later approached me in the pub and speaking on condition of anonymity, nervously confided "They treat men mean in chalet #1".

Mel, Russell and James seemed a happy lot anytime I popped over to rob their place but I suspected it was like the couple in "Father Ted" and that the blazing rows only stopped when they heard me knocking. The two 5-bed Toblerone-shaped chalets looked down on the two ghetto-town smaller square 3-bed chalets but we all looked out on a fabulous loch, surrounded by hills, that went out to sea. Our nearby pub was dog friendly and we met two lovely doggies our first night. One member of the staff was not so human-friendly but they mellowed as the weekend went on.



*Slippery slopes on Stob Diamh*

Day 2 was dry and bright and a short drive took us to Glencoe and a fine ascent up the Pap of Glencoe, with commanding vistas, including Ben Nevis. We enjoyed the pap, though as Terry said, there was no biting or nibbling allowed. We then crossed over, via a saddle and a nice ridge to Sgurr nam Fiannaidh, from where we got fine views into Glencoe itself. As we sat on Sgurr nam Fiannaidh, we were joined by 3 gentlemen who commented on the tornado that had just gone by. This produced some perplexity in Russell's mind, who knew such things were a bit exotic for these parts. Thankfully his mind was set at rest when it dawned that they meant a Royal Air Force Tornado aircraft. Post-hike, Terry, Liz, Shauna, James and I decided we had earned a holiday treat and enjoyed lovely food and a pint in the Glencoe Inn.

Day 3 did not look like we would be lucky with the weather as it started raining as we reached Kinlochleven. Added to this there was a painful cacophony of unnatural noise from a nearby motorbike-scrambling event and construction machinery working on the lower slopes. The omens were not good. All this is to set the scene and maybe in some way excuse the shocking decision of 4 experienced and previously respected members of the club to drop out and choose a handy day touring Glen Etive and environs by motor car. To protect their dignity, their names, T#### C####n, S##### O####a, C##### F#####d and C##### C####n, have been redacted from this account and we will simply refer to them as the "Cappuccino Four". One member of this infamous gang confided the leisurely and possibly illicit activities they engaged in but I will nae repeat them here lest future groups be similarly undermined by thoughts of ease.



*All 16 on Stob Diamh*

For those of us who hiked, the rain stopped after 15 minutes, the day warmed up and the sounds of machinery and motor-bikes were thankfully soon left far behind. We enjoyed a pleasant woodland/river walk up to the Blackwater Reservoir (16.5 km, 400m). The dam on this early 20<sup>th</sup> century reservoir was fun to cross but it was a poignant moment when we came upon the nearby graveyard to workers who died constructing the reservoir. To judge by the names, a third of them were Irish emigrants / seasonal migrants, or their descendants.

After this day of leisurely walking (or leisurely not-walking) we were due a good crack at the mountains and got it, this time in the southern edge of Glencoe, on Buachaille Etive Beag, taking in Stob Coire Raineach and then Stob Dubh (9km, 960 ascent). As ever, the tracks were very good while the landscape was overwhelmingly beautiful. The weather was fine and got better as the day went on, as a heatwave was reaching Scotland. We were finished this walk by 4pm, so Mel gave folk the option of driving up the glen and doing another 4 km in to the Hidden Valley.

Most took him up on this, though myself, Tom, Carina and Richard, perhaps lead astray by the bad example of the Cappuccino Four, decided to hit Glencoe Inn and enjoy some fudge cake (deservedly earning us a "Fudge Four" title).



*In the Lost Valley - but we weren't lost!*

The final walk of the holiday saw us decamp from Onich and say a fond farewell to our cosy chalets then drive back south toward Loch Lomond. We started our hike at the famous Drovers Inn and did probably the best sustained climb of the trip, up to Beinn Cabhair (15kms with 1050 m ascent). We then retired to the well-loved Drovers Inn, where cute Irish accents went down a treat with the barmaid (sorry Søren & Russell!). We also met the adorable doggie Domino.

Apart from pub dogs, wildlife sightings were not as plentiful as in previous years, though we were very fortunate to hear the Cuckoo singing constantly and on the last day some of us even got a rare good sighting of three of them. All credit to Mel for an expertly and patiently lead trip that was immensely enjoyed by both Scottish newbies and veterans. Thanks Mel

## On the Camino Portugués

*text & photos by Kevin McGinley*

---

*Route: Golegã, Tomar, Alvaiázere, Rabaçal, Coimbra and Mealhada  
(155 km over 5 days walking)*

'I wouldn't bother with that - too much road walking!' was the sentiment I heard expressed about this route.

And it began inauspiciously with my backpack failing to turn up on the carousel at Lisbon airport. 'Never mind,' they said, 'we'll deliver it to your accommodation.' I gave them the address of a hostel in my guidebook which I found later to be closed. I eventually located an alternative and then used the opportunity to look around the attractive city. There had been an earthquake in 1755 so the rebuilt centre where I was staying was characterised by long, straight streets leading down to the River Tejo.



*Arco Augusto Lisboa*

A curiosity was the old trams, now more crowded with picture-snapping tourists than locals, trundling along narrow streets precariously close to pedestrians. Returning from a visit to the Sé, the cathedral, and on hearing lovely music from a nearby church, I wandered in to discover a 'black' mass: in the sense that virtually all there were of African origin. The singing was full of energy, spirit and rich melody. My reaction of serendipity was, however, reined in by my knowledge of the effects on native populations of the country's colonialism. However, the evening was nicely rounded off with a communal meal at the hostel followed by singing and guitar playing.

After having extracted my bag from the airport, I set off, on the advice of a peregrino from a northern route, on the train to Santarem to avoid the 'awful' suburban sprawl out of Lisbon and the crowds making their way to Fatima. To cut a long story short, I missed my stop and ended up in a place away off my intended route called Enroncamento. I walked across country to a Vila Nova da Barquina. I fell into conversation with a young man in the café there, and like the Coleridge's ancient mariner, regaled him with my tale. He insisted on giving me a lift back to Golegã and did so via a scenic route. That town was a day's walk from Santarem. So much for planning!

*Golegã* is famous for horses; accommodation for 'horsey' week is booked up a year in advance. Sitting in the square, opposite the beautiful old church, with birds singing – ah, heaven! Later, I met and hooked up with a couple from Walkinstown, intrepid travellers, going northwards like myself. I speculated about life there and what the verdant vegetation does to the people: give them an easy life or drive them mad? They also seemed an unanimated people though I was told the people of Porto were different: like the people of Osaka (the 'Irish of Japan'), compared to those in Tokyo. Anyway my companions who, unlike myself, had already done some serious walking from Lisbon, reported that it is much cheaper here but there are fewer *albergues*.

On my way out of town the following morning, I experienced a feature of this part of the camino: easy-to-miss or unclear signs. But, I was soon put right by two Hungarian girls. Interestingly, I met no other *peregrinos* during my trek – except for a very few at hostels, some of whom were cyclists. It is really an empty route.

And yes, as suggested earlier, there was a fair bit of road walking. It sounds worse than it is. Much of it is on fairly quiet secondary roads'. We proceeded through a number of villages (passing Vila Nova da Barquina again) and noted that the boundaries are not well indicated. Although it was hot at 26 C, there was some shade afforded by taller trees.

My experience of the hostel at Tomar reinforced my reaction to the one in Lisbon; in general, hostels of a high standard. Only once was I tempted to get out my mattress protector to inhibit the arrival of uninvited visitors from below. I was told on the Camino Français that there are carried from one place to another by the careless placing of infected backpacks on beds.

Unless you have time, it is too easy to omit exploring the end-of-day places on the camino: the rhythm of walk, eat and sleep, takes over. So, it was with Tomar, a lovely, historic medieval town with its various layers of history: early, Moorish, Templar and Portuguese. The following morning, I had to backtrack a couple of times to find the way out despite following the signs religiously. It was comforting that the Walkinstown couple had a similar experience, despite the lady having the eye of an eagle. The guidebook came in for criticism and not for the first time. It was on this part of the way that a truck, piled high with logs, broke off an overhanging branch above my head. It snagged on the way down but I did think it was curtains. We dragged the offending branch off the road.

I remember the *Alvaiázere - Rabaçal* stage particularly well - because of the attention I received from dogs. It happened three times. After the first, I picked up what looked like a dried-up hazel rod. That proved handy when warding off, first, a pack of three dogs followed later by another pair. My previous sympathy for chained up dogs on the way – the norm – took on a different aspect! The hostel at *Rabaçal* was closed on arrival. But the lady of the museum next door opened it for me. But, I did hear two other voices from another room there that night. My experience at the local café/restaurant was what I had come to love on the pilgrim route: good plain food, noisy locals and good atmosphere - despite the inevitable TV which no one watches.



*A woodland path: the essence of the Camino*

En route then to *Coimbra* I missed the centre of *Cernache* completely – that lack of signs again. Some of the places I passed through were 'far from the madding crowd': old couples working together in fields; the women head-scarfed, in one case, one pulling a pile of hay with a cord over her shoulder. Where were the young, a question I asked myself as I passed through the villages? With regard to the guidebook, even the humblest places get a mention. In some remote cafés, it was assumed that I would drink my *água com gás* straight from the bottle. On the approaches to *Coimbra*, you pass by the remains of a Roman aqueduct which had been destroyed to make way for a road; I just could not imagine much sympathy for preserving the habitat of rare snails as in the case of our own Kildare M7 bypass! Anyway, I travelled down the steep hill past the monastery, across the busy bridge, only to find the hostel was closed. I retraced my footsteps to order to locate a second choice but was told by a policeman it was on the other side of the river. Despair at that stage! A further tortuous inquiry, however, revealed it was just behind me and part of the monastery I had passed earlier.

At Mealhada, I began to get concerned about communication links between my next stages, *Águeda* and *Albergaria-a-Velha*, and my intermediate destination, *Porto*. In order to spend a little time there, I decided to take the train, via *Aveiro*. *Porto*, by reputation a lovely city, did not disappoint. But, on arrival at the very central Estação de São Bento, I was appalled by the throngs of tourists attracted there. The historical centre is a World Heritage site. The following day, I just couldn't resist taking a tram ride, one that passed along the river side and part of the lovely, historic core. In the evening, I had dinner in the old town, where the sound of voices echoes as people call or talk to each other through open doors and windows. In general, you would have to spend a week in the city to explore its history, architecture and culture.

Time to go home, I thought with pleasure. So, I took the train back to Lisbon (trains are inexpensive and run on time) to spend another night in that excellent hostel in Rua São Nicolau (41). I also wanted time to hear some more *Fado* song, with its mournful, soulful melodies. To my mind, it is not unlike some *Sean-Nós* songs: when well sung, it is wonderful but somehow you are a little relieved when it is over.



***The Hand-of-Fatima door knockers***  
***(In addition to many place names, evidence of Moorish influence since 711AD)***

So, how is this camino different from the Camino Français? This less travelled route was, in June, relatively empty. The distance between stages is longer ( my average was 31 km per day) and there are fewer available pit stops. The way is not well indicated but this improved as I moved north. There is, indeed, a good deal of travelling on secondary roads but they are usually quiet. There are fewer *albergues* and *albergue* menus. I was very pleasantly surprised by the quality of the red wine. The hostels I experienced were good, sometimes very good. Do not assume *albergues* and hostels will be open. Best to do what I failed to do: phone ahead first! The Portuguese people I met were very helpful when you engage with them. Food and beverages are cheap. The bird life is varied and abundant as are wild flowers on woodland paths and elsewhere.

The warden of the *albergue* at *Alvaiázere*, who prides himself on providing the best pilgrim passport stamp (a waxed seal), claims the Camino Português will take off within five years. And, of course, any publicity in these days of mass tourism is often the death knell of places of beauty. So, shhh! But get your boots on!

## Ring of Imaal Challenge Walk

*text by Jim Barry*

The Ring of Imaal Challenge walk on Saturday June 25<sup>th</sup> was very successful. The early morning rain on Keadeen eased off and brighter drier conditions made for a promising afternoon. However, low level cloud hugged the high peaks for much of the day creating navigational difficulties for some. 50 participants, from various parts of the country, braved the elements and set out on the 35 kilometre course from 0630hrs onwards. 45 participants successfully completed the course and were delighted to receive their certs and refreshments when they arrived back to the Control Centre in Donard Village. All 50 Participants returned safely. A special mention for James Jaycock who completed the Challenge in 5 hours 10 minutes

All 9 Hillwalkers Club members who participated in the event successfully completed the challenge. Congratulations to *Soren Stuhr Mandrup, James Cooke, Gerry Cooke, Brian Flynn, Joe Millar, John Gordon, Colm Brennan, Damian McDonald and Frank Rooney*

A sincere "Thank You" and "Well Done" to all the participants who supported the event and to the volunteers who attended to the various supporting tasks throughout the day not forgetting the residents of the Glen (including land owners) for their ongoing support throughout the years.

Checkpoint Stewards: *Ita O'Hanlon, Philip Hayden, Tara Russell, Martin Fagan, Tom Milligan, Garry Byrne, Gerry Walsh, Steve Buckney, Ines Lopez, Lourdes Hernandez, Tom O'Loughlin, Martin Keane, Anne Carpenter, and roll-up team Tom Kenny and Frank Rooney*

Catering Team: *Anne Carpenter and Breda Kavanagh*

Coordinating Team : *Margaret D'arcy, Jim Barry, Mel O'Hara,*

A special mention to Maureen Quigley and Michael O'Reilly, Donard Community Centre Committee, who allowed us the use of their hall and cafe facilities.

An Óige have put any surplus money towards the Glendalough Y.H. Shower Maintenance Fund.



*Tara and Philip on checkpoint duty – Photo Frank Rooney*



*Tom on checkpoint duty – a good advert for Berghaus gear – Photo – Frank Rooney*



*On the trail - the final checkpoint – Photo – Frank Rooney*



*The loneliness of the long distance roller-upper – Tom Kenny on roll-up duty  
Photo – Frank Rooney*

## Picos Amigos share week of sun and stunning vistas in north of Spain

This trip was a few years in the making, with Inés Lopez having dreamed of showing the mountains of Asturias (the real Spain!) to her fellow Hillwalkers since she joined the club in 2012. When "Asturiano" José joined the club, he was immediately recruited as a co-organiser, and the serious planning began. The ultimate result was seven days of walking, eating and a little singing...

We flew into Santander Airport on July 17<sup>th</sup>, collected five rented cars and made our way from Cantabria to Asturias, to the small town of Cangas de Onis, close to the mountains and lakes of Los Picos de Europa. For one hillwalker, Carina Fitzgerald, this was a return trip, what with her having visited this part of Spain sixteen years earlier. Cangas de Onis offered us the wonderful El Abuelo restaurant on the first night, sourced by Peter and a bridge beside which several of the group went for post hike swims over the following days.

Our first two days' walks took us to the Covadonga lakes, with the first hike in particular being very testing in the heat of a Spanish summer. The aforementioned "Party" Peter Gillette had a close shave with the authorities when he took a forbidden dip in the beautiful Lago Enol, but he survived to fully embrace the Asturian experience as the week progressed.



*Group at Refugio de Vegarredonda 1450 m – Photo Celia Estan*

Particularly charming along the routes we took were the numbers of cows (vacas) and goats (cabras) to be met, with their bells a clanging as they munched on the scarce grass between the rocks. Several enormous bulls (toros) were met and passed without their taking the slightest bit of interest in the Irish (and Spanish) crew of desperados. The first two days also offered the chance to visit an impressive Marian grotto (La Virgen de Covadonga) and basilica on our way back from the lakes.

The first two days of sweltering heat were followed by more Irish appropriate weather as the week went on, and the hard graft of the first day definitely stood to us as the days progressed. No hike subsequently was done in such broiling temperatures, and none tested us as much.

Our second base, the Albergue la Estación hostel in Llanes saw us bunking in together, after the relative luxury of the hotel in Cangas de Onis. The location in the beach side town was first class, close to the sea and the centre of town. The hostel will be fondly remembered by all for its sumptuous breakfast each morning, spoiling us hikers with its bread based offering. Absolutely no need to go out and buy muesli and extra bread to survive. None.

Thursday's walk above the gorge on La Ruta del (Rio) Cares gave a bit of a fright to those of us who tend to avoid heights, with a relatively narrow path hanging over a sheer drop on occasion. Ollie Gleeson in particular was happy to find the eatery at the end of the route, for a "proper feed", after days of sandwiches at lunch time!



*Gorge path – photo – Carina Fitzgerald*

Friday's walk saw us take a train up the coast and walk back to our Llanes base, led by the obliging Señor Mark Campion. We stopped at a couple of great beaches, and some of the party took advantage to go for a swim in "El Mar Cantabrico". We walked all the way back to our hostel, making this a no car day for the group.

The final day's hike, to Fuente Dé, offered us a vista of Naranjo de Bulnes for a finish, after we had enjoyed a thrilling cable car ride. This was an "alternative" hike, our original designs on Naranjo de Bulnes itself being stymied by fog. Nonetheless, it gave us some of the best views and photos of the entire week, and was a wonderful hike to finish off the whole adventure.



*El Mar Cantabrico – Photo – Carina Fitzgerald*

The final night out saw a mass outbreak of singing, with Peter, appropriately enough, kick-starting the party. He led the way singing-wise on the Irish side, ably supported by Christy Doughan (or should that be Moore!) and Karina. Several nearby Spanish diners made contributions to the Hiberno-Hispanic singathon during what was a great fiesta! Afterwards, we stopped at a local bar for a quiet drink (or perhaps two). The night's fun was increased by the fact of the Fiesta de la Magdalena being celebrated in town.

Sunday the 24<sup>th</sup> was return day, with some tired hikers scrambling to gather their gear together, get an injection of coffee and pile into the cars, exhausted but satisfied after the week's exertions. A huge thanks to Inés, José, Celia, Pater and Alicia (José's better half) for driving us safely all week, from Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> at the airport to Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> back at the airport.

#### Standout memories?

- Peter's swimming and singing
- Carina and Geraldine braving the slopes in a variety of footwear, with sandals and runners being tried out on different days.
- The view down into gorge on La Ruta del Cares
- The friendly cows and goats we encountered on the first few days' hiking (Christy has plenty of pictures to back this up!)
- The sing-song and drinks on the last night, which rounded off a great break

The Spanish contingent got great amusement during the week at seeing how the sensitive Irish stomachs rebelled at being asked to eat dinner at 10 p.m., followed by breakfast at half past seven the each morning! No six o'clock "tea" in Asturias!

Our group blended older and newer members, but everyone got on well and there was a great sense of camaraderie on the stony mountainsides.



*Snow in the Picos - photo – Carina Fitzgerald*

It was a tired, browned but happy group of Hillwalkers who arrived back in Dublin Airport on July 24<sup>th</sup>, after a hard week of hiking in what was an Asturian wonderland. Some lucky members of the group stayed on for an extended Spanish getaway.

Many thanks to Inés and Jose for making their dream a reality for all of us.

# October long weekend 2016

## ***Friday 28<sup>th</sup> to Monday 31st October***

There will be two organised walks each day, *aimed to suit members of the Hillwalkers and fit hard-moderate walkers*. The walks will be in the Galty, Knockmealdown or Comeragh mountains.

The relevant maps are OSI 74 and 75

**Hotel accommodation:** Cahir House Hotel, The Square, Cahir, Co Tipperary.

**Cost:** €260, payable in full at the time of booking, which includes twin-share hotel accommodation, meals and bus transport.

**Bookings open for Hillwalkers Club members on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> September**

**Bookings for other An Óige members open on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> September**

Payment for the weekend is through the Club's Paypal system. Please go to the Club website ([www.hillwalkersclub.com](http://www.hillwalkersclub.com)) then click on 'Event Booking' (towards the bottom of the left list), selecting 'October long weekend' to pay €260 in full.

*Bookings are not secure until payment in full has been made.*

Payment queries to the Club Administrator: Ita O'Hanlon, itaohdubs@gmail.com.

**Meals:** Breakfasts (Saturday, Sunday, Monday), lunch sandwich (Saturday, Sunday and Monday) and dinners (Saturday and Sunday) are included in the price

**Bring:** Suitable walking boots, rain gear, walking gear, warm clothing, towels, toilet gear, flask, torch, first aid kit, camera, binoculars etc.

**Meeting place and Departure time:**

Luke St (off George's Quay) at **18.30h** on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> October

**Return:** Arriving back into Dublin at approximately 21.00h on Monday 31<sup>st</sup> October