

August 2020

10 day solo cycling trip from Malin head to Mizen head - covering 1207km by taking the scenic route along the Wild Atlantic Way.

I want to make this part travelogue, part checklist/guide and hopefully somewhat entertaining.

I went north to south because it suited me, the prevailing wind would suggest cycling from south to north but I like a challenge so I went the other way! I brought a tent & sleeping bag with me and camped out 6 of the 9 nights.

Summary of trip in the table below. With the benefit of hindsight I probably did a bit more mileage than I should have each day and it meant a lot of time in the saddle, but if you were not carrying tent/sleeping bag, etc with you then your load would be lighter and the daily distance more manageable.

Day	Start	Finish	Distance (km)	Moving time	Total elapsed time	Avg speed (km/h)
1	Malin Head	Rossnowlagh	128	6:24:54	8:09:57	20
2	Rossnowlagh	Ballina	141	7:00:42	9:18:05	20.1
3	Ballina	Connemara	131	6:34:52	10:50:27	19.8
4	Connemara	Salthill	142	6:24:28	8:44:44	22.2
5	Salthill	Miltown Malbay	120	5:43:21	9:10:43	21
6	Miltown Malbay	Tralee	122	5:29:33	8:40:59	22.2
7	Tralee	Waterville	117	5:13:48	9:14:32	22.3
8	Waterville	Eyeries	108	4:39:36	11:12:36	23.2
9	Eyeries	Kilcrohane	125	5:58:38	7:03:37	21.1
10	Kilcrohane	Mizen Head	72	3:00:51	3:28:46	23.7
		Total	1,207	56:30:43	85:54:26	21.4

Useful things to have:

- [Pocket Map](#)
- USB battery block
- Panniers – I got seat post panniers so I didn't need to convert my road bike or use a dedicated tourer (which would've meant buying another bike!)
- Pannier bags - Ortlieb [back roller classic](#)
- Front handlebar bag - [toppeak](#)

- [Top Tube Bag](#) to hold phone & snacks
- Chamois cream!



Link here for [Google Map](#) with 137 points of interest all along the way tagged. These are a mix of Swimspots/Cafes/Restaurants/Viewpoints/Campsites/Bikeshops and other things along the Wild Atlantic Way route. Some of them I stopped at, some I didn't get to but were recommended to me, mostly by wonderful fellow club members.

Self preservation - I took the [primary position](#) on roads where I felt it was needed, i.e. to prevent traffic overtaking dangerously on narrow roads where I would get squeezed if there was oncoming traffic. Overall, I had a few hairy moments and close passes but I believe that they were reduced by riding assertively.

Day 1:



Killian Nolan

🚴 August 5, 2020 at 11:42 AM · Inishowen Municipal District, County Donegal

Day 1: Malin head to Rosstown



Distance
128.24 km

Elevation Gain
1,169 m

Moving Time
6:23:54

Avg Power
79 W

Avg Speed
20.0 km/h

Calories
2,551 Cal



Malin to Rossnowlagh. 128km Malin to Buncrana ~40km of decent roads. Ferry from Buncrana to Rathmullan, on to Letterkenny. Bastard of a hill out of Letterkenny on N13. N13/N15 the rest of the way. Wide hard shoulder which meant I could make decent progress but it was busy. When I got to Donegal town and decided to push on to Rossnowlagh.

It rained most of the day and I was feeling a bit damp and sorry for myself, with so much of the journey ahead of me I called and booked a bed in the Smugglers Creek which overlooks the beach at Rossnowlagh. Checked in and then went straight down for a dip in the sea. Magic. Deep fried brie, scampi & chips and two pints of Guinness as I watched the sun set and light fade on the bay.

Day 2:



Killian Nolan

🚲 August 6, 2020 at 10:23 AM · Donegal Municipal District, County Donegal

Day 2: Rossnowlagh to Ballina



Distance
141.01 km

Elevation Gain
1,068 m

Moving Time
7:00:25

Avg Power
79 W

Avg Speed
20.1 km/h

Calories
2,808 Cal

I started to feel better about the handling of the bike now. With the extra weight it throws off your balance. I slowly started to trust in the seat pannier and that the weight wasn't going to cause it to snap every time I hit a bump in the road, which was pretty regular. Sligo roads are less smooth than Donegal. Donegal council workers seemed to be out in force at every turn resurfacing their roads - rest of the counties take note! N15 with a wide hard shoulder was fine but the sections without the hard shoulder were less enjoyable. I tried to stay on coastal roads away from the traffic for the most part. Stopped in to Lucy (a fellow club member) along the way, she fed me Cabbage & rice, and provided me with some cookies to power me though. Wind in the face for a large part of the journey and I began to tire towards the end of the day. Last 15km from Enniscrone to Ballina were difficult. I contemplated staying in Enniscrone but I didn't want to fall behind on the plan when I was only on day 2. Plus I had rung the campsite in [Belleek woods](#), just outside Ballina and spoken to the lovely old woman in charge who thought I was mad to be cycling solo along with a tent and took pity on me and agreed to find a space to let me pitch my tent despite being booked out. Arrived late, had a glorious hot shower and went down to Belleek Castle. Got treated to a bit of a VIP experience, cycled over on my own, no seats available in the restaurant but they ended up seating me in the banquet hall where weddings usually take place. Had my own bar, music and audience with the Castle owner, the Baron.



Day 3:



Killian Nolan

🚴 August 7, 2020 at 10:34 AM · Ballina Municipal District, County Mayo

Day 3: Part 1 - Ballina to Leenaun



Distance	Elevation Gain
119.22 km	763 m
Moving Time	Avg Power
5:47:39	75 W
Avg Speed	Calories
20.6 km/h	2,270 Cal



Killian Nolan

🚴 August 7, 2020 at 8:52 PM · Conamara Municipal District, County Galway

Day 3: Part 2 -Leenaun to Lettergesh



Distance	Elevation Gain
11.52 km	92 m
Moving Time	Avg Power
32:55	83 W
Avg Speed	Calories
21.0 km/h	287 Cal

Breakfast at the Post House in Ballina. Had a chat with the staff and mentioned the trip I had planned. Settled up my bill, went to the bathroom and came back to discover a bag left beside my helmet with a Scone, butter, cream & jam inside and on the house! This was a magical start to the day and another great sign of the kindness of others which became a bit of a theme on this trip.

The scone became useful because just 3km outside Ballina one of my gear cables snapped and I had to turn around and limp back to Ballina (in a heavy gear) to a bike shop which thankfully was able to help me out, but it did mean a 1.5hr delay which was less than ideal. Far less debilitating that had it happened in no man's land between Ballina and Newport. The scone got munched, I almost went back to the post house for lunch at that rate but decided better of it, I rolled into Westport late – and the cafes I had intended on visiting for lunch were all closed considering it was about 4pm at this stage. Spar sandwich, Tayto and a 99 were my fueling as I pushed on out towards Croagh Patrick and Killary Fjord.



This cycle on the R335 as you drop down towards Doolough valley and Delphi is fantastic. The sun was shining and it was just gorgeous. I was still a good bit behind schedule and the day

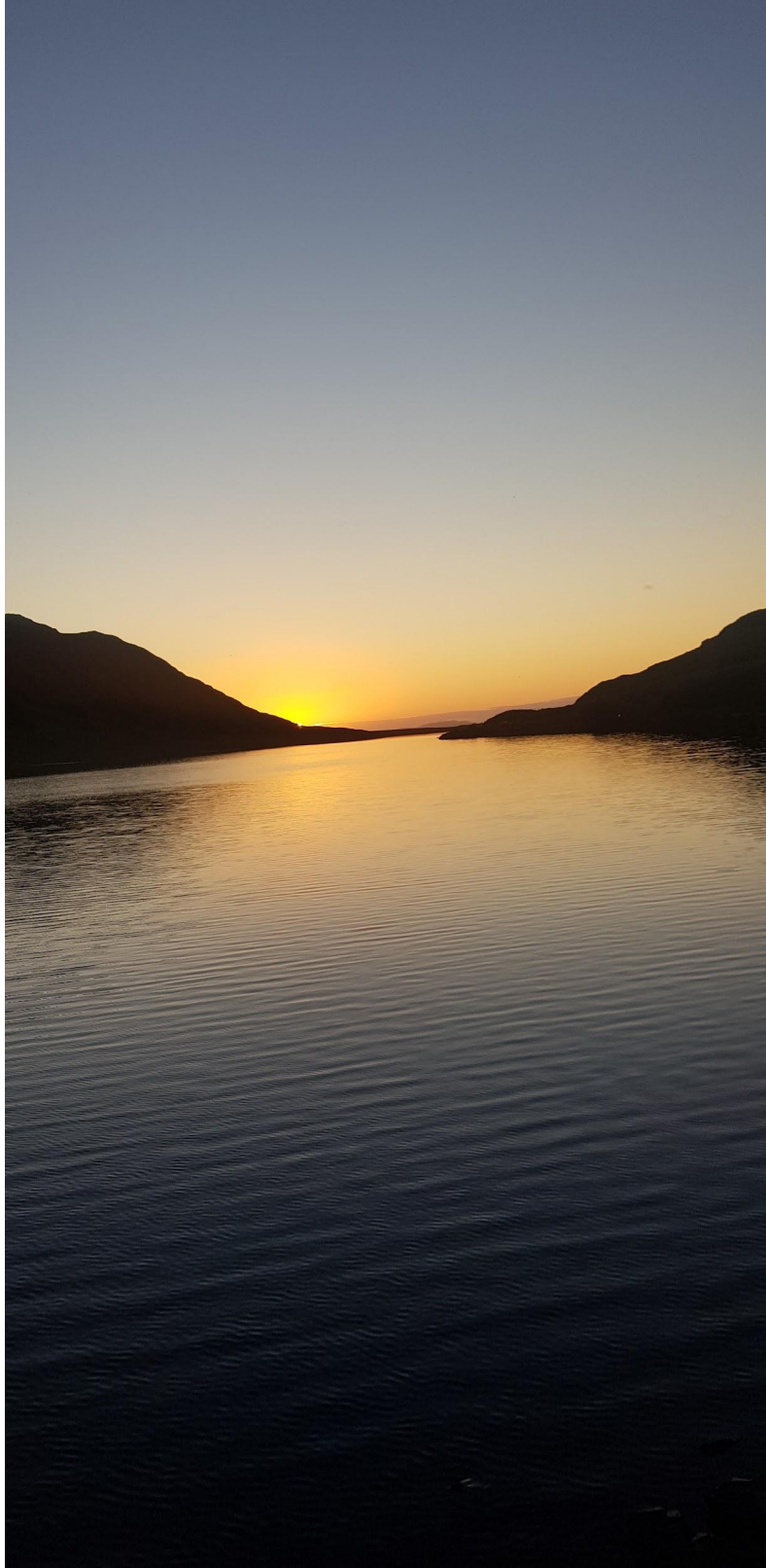
was pushing on, I made it across the Mayo/Galway border and to Leenaun where I pulled up STARVED! There were a couple of very inviting looking seats outside the Blackberry restaurant and lucky for me they were free, so I sat down, ordered a beer and a heap of calamari & hake.



I had a decision to make at this point. I had already come a long way but there was no campsite in Leenaun, and the nearest campsite (my planned stop) was another 12km away. I rang the campsite and Liam the owner said he'd have a spot for me. It was already 8.30pm at this stage but I was feeling good after my feed and decided to push on. This began the most beautiful 12km I have ever cycled, perhaps it was partly the beer and my giddy head but I was travelling west to the campsite and the sun was setting in front of me as I played a game of chasing with it. The fjord was on my right and it was gleaming in the late evening light. I made it to the campsite, pitched up, showered and admired the ocean view. Heavenly.

[Connemara Caravan and Camping Park](#) – the place to be!

Sligo – Mayo – Galway: what a day. Slept like a log.



Day 4:



Killian Nolan

August 8, 2020 at 11:05 AM · Conamara Municipal District, County Galway

Day 4: Lettergesh to Salthill via Sky road ☀️



Distance	Elevation Gain
142.46 km	949 m
Moving Time	Avg Power
6:24:58	89 W
Avg Speed	Calories
22.2 km/h	4,900 Cal

Morning in the campsite was lovely. Took a quick dip in the water and made friends with my next door tent neighbours. They were a family from west Clare. Luckily they spotted my plight when I realised I was about 12km from my nearest opportunity for some breakfast. They shared some bread, snacks and a cuppa with me and gave me their address in Co.Clare should I need it. I set off to Kylemore Abbey where I was able to treat myself to a full feed in their café. The Abbey looks great across the lake, I spent less time taking in the view than I did the food and then hit the road towards Clifden.



This section of the N71 was busy and not much of a hard shoulder or space for safe overtaking. I turned off for the Sky road and this was one of the highlights. Upper Sky road viewing point was superlative. I rode it anti clockwise but if I was going back I would cycle it the other way.



Forged ahead and stopped in Ballyconeely for an ice cream and on past the beaches outside roundstone. It was rammed and there was parking and traffic chaos. Turned out it was Saturday – the joys of being on holiday and completely losing track of days!

Stopped at O'Dwyers in Roundstone and had a delicious goats cheese tart. Pushed on through bog roads and rocky outcrops with the sun shining for company and the twelve bens in the distance for company. Road was bumpy in places but ok – when I joined up with the R336 for the last 30km through Spiddeal and on to Salthill it was not enjoyable. Main route for cars and they're moving.



Made it to the [campsite](#) in Salthill around 8pm after 143km of epic cycling through Connemara and it really left quite the impression on me. I will be back on those roads again. Shower and a spin into Galway centre for a pizza and a beer and then back to my tent for another 8 hours of blissful & regenerative sleep.

Day 5:



Killian Nolan

🚴 August 9, 2020 at 10:15 AM · Galway City, County Galway

Day 5: Salthill to Spanish Point, via Fanore, Cliffs of Moher, Lahinch



Distance
120.07 km

Elevation Gain
877 m

Moving Time
5:44:38

Avg Power
83 W

Avg Speed
20.9 km/h

Calories
4,051 Cal

Started the day with a swim at Blackrock tower in Salthill. It's an iconic swim spot that we should all experience. Early morning crew only at this stage so it wasn't busy. This, plus a hearty breakfast set me up for the road ahead - Oranmore to Kinvara and on to Linnane's Lobster Bar in Co.Clare.



Shane & Brianne were on holidays in the neighbourhood and secured a table outside in the sunshine. Chats, calamari and fish cakes provided the fuel for the second half of the spin. Fantastic scenery through Fanore, Doolin, the Cliffs of Moher, down to Liscannor and on to Lahinch where a large 99 was waiting for us. I took in Spanish Point before heading for one of the two campsites I had on my list. Turns out the internet isn't quite all knowing and the campsites in Spanish Point were for mobile homes only and had no camping pitches. At this point it was getting late, and I was getting hungry, the next campsite was 20km away (and after calling them they had no space anyway). Just as well, the family I made friends with from the campsite in Connemara lived less than 5km away so I pulled up on their door and set up camp in their back garden in Miltown Malbay for the night. Lucky me, and generous of them, they fed me and even washed and dried my cycling gear for me! What a day.



Day 6:



Killian Nolan

🚴 August 10, 2020 at 9:57 AM · West Clare
Municipal District, County Clare

Day 6: Spanish Point to Tralee via Ballybunnion



Distance
121.79 km

Elevation Gain
883 m

Moving Time
5:29:44

Avg Power
90 W

Avg Speed
22.2 km/h

Calories
4,166 Cal

Clean clothes and a full stomach. Quick stop in Doonbeg to salute Trump International golf course and on through Kilrush and Kilkee and Killimer for my ferry ticket to Kerry! Five of my finest euros got me a one way ticket on the Killimer to Tarbert Ferry.



Great things awaited in Tarbert in the form of my parents who had decided to follow along for the last few days in their car. Got to sit in the sun and exchange stories and smiles. This also allowed me to lighten the load and my support vehicle took my pannier bags. Some may call this cheating but I wholeheartedly disagree - it was most welcome after 6 days of constant company. I was happy for some alone time away from the extra weight :) Turns out I only have one speed setting though, despite losing the bags I didn't really get any faster.



Ballybunion to Ballyheige and Banna - bonus was a stay in the Ballyroe Heights Hotel for the night, what's this you say? No bags on the bike and no camping in a field? It's like I'm on holiday or something!

Turns out the company in the evening meant indulging in a few whiskies after dinner - something I hadn't done to date on this trip. Being hungover and cycling long distances don't go very well together. IF ONLY I'D KNOWN!

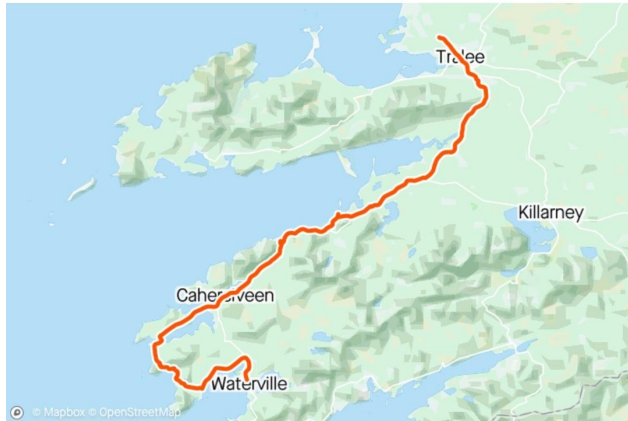
Day 7:



Killian Nolan

🚴 August 11, 2020 at 10:00 AM · Tralee Municipal District, County Kerry

Day 7: Tralee to Waterville, via Rossbeigh, Valentia Island



Distance
116.60 km

Elevation Gain
1,212 m

Moving Time
5:14:12

Avg Power
109 W

Avg Speed
22.3 km/h

Calories
4,388 Cal

Big breakfast at the hotel and on to Tralee. Normally at this point you would turn and head along the N86 on the Dingle peninsula and up and over Conor Pass but I've been fortunate to spend a whole lot of time in this neck of the woods before (many of which have been on club training weekends) so I decided to skip this part of the coastline and across to the other lesser known peninsulas. Onward to the N70 and Killorglin, Glenbeigh and Rossbeigh Beach - what a stunner! Stopped for a dip in the water here and cycled up to a viewing spot overlooking the beach to soak it in. What a treat, the entire Dingle bay was shimmering, the blue sky and waters melted into one another and I felt privileged that Ireland was yet again giving up the goodies to me day after day.



Further along the north side of the Ring of Kerry to Kells Bay House & Gardens for lunch. Here is my complaint for this day - it was too hot, and too sunny! My 3rd reapplication of suncream and a beer sent me on my way to Cahersiveen and a right turn for Valentia Island. Quick 5 min ferry ride to the island and a look around - the island is about 10km long and connected to the mainland on the other side at Portmagee. Half way along is Valentia Island Ice Cream, put this place on your list - I can particularly recommend the honeycomb and the mint crisp varieties.



From Portmagee began a wonderfully challenging climb up past the Kerry cliffs to Coomanaspic. Proper hard work to get up this one and just before getting to the top the clouds rolled in to obstruct the view. At least they had a picture of what the view would look like in a sign at the top. The descent down towards Ballinskelligs was gorgeous. Another 10km to Waterville and that was the time in the saddle done for the day. The Smugglers Inn in Waterville was one of the culinary highlights, Olive tapenade, chowder, hake - all fantastic. I dipped in the sea and camped in the dunes beside the restaurant and fell asleep to the sound of the waves lapping on the shore beside me.



Day 8:



Killian Nolan

🚴 August 12, 2020 at 7:59 AM · Kenmare Municipal District, County Kerry

Day 8: Waterville to Eyeries. Getting closer now!



Distance	Elevation Gain
108.32 km	869 m
Moving Time	Avg Power
4:39:41	101 W
Avg Speed	Calories
23.2 km/h	3,818 Cal

Early start to meet friends in Caherdaniel for breakfast. Lovely climb out of Waterville along with 2 other cyclists that I met on the road to the lookout before spinning downhill to Caherdaniel. Derrynane beach is a lovely stop along here. On through Sneem to Kenmare for a lunch stop. Some dodgy sections of road. Lots of sun - had to reapply suncream! On to Teddy O'Sullivan's (aka Helen's bar) for a seafood platter and a few Guinness. This was another one of the highlights. Sun was high in the sky and lots of benches by the pier - it's the perfect setting for a sunny day. Hard to tear ourselves away but needed to get down the road and cross the border to Co. Cork to Eyeries. More pints and some wine. Stayed in a self catering house with the parents here.



Day 9:



Killian Nolan

August 13, 2020 at 8:56 AM · West Cork, County Cork

Day 9: Part 1 - Eyeries to Allihies, Dursey Island, Castletownbere and Glengarriff



Distance	Elevation Gain
82.71 km	966 m
Moving Time	Avg Power
3:49:05	104 W
Avg Speed	Calories
21.7 km/h	3,146 Cal



Killian Nolan

August 13, 2020 at 3:22 PM · West Cork, County Cork

Day 9: part 2 Glengarriff to Bantry and on to Kilcrohane



Distance	Elevation Gain
41.91 km	542 m
Moving Time	Avg Power
2:09:40	96 W
Avg Speed	Calories
19.4 km/h	1,590 Cal

Heavy rain overnight, which I hadn't seen or heard of since day 1 of the spin. It gave way after breakfast, but the boozing overnight didn't help. Regardless, the spin from Eyeries to Allihies was great fun - ups and downs, twists & turns - got the blood pumping. Nice climb from Allihies to Dursey Island. Dursey Island cable car is the only cable car in Ireland and it was there to see in all its rusted glory!

After 8 days of glorious sunshine my good luck finally ran out and the next 55km from Dursey to Glengarriff via Castletown Bere were endured with gritted teeth and goretex jacket. Pegs shop in Adrigole saved me along this stretch - Lucozade and a Snickers never tasted so good. Lunch with the parents and a bowl of chowder and a tuna melt topped up the energy levels. Still, one of the good things about this adventure is the appetite, always room for desert - after every lunch and dinner! Brownie and a cuppa in the Sugarloaf coffee shop - the owner offered me these on the house once she found out what I was doing/where I was coming from. This random kindness is one of the abiding memories of my entire trip. Rain continued through Bantry and out on the northside of the sheepshead peninsula towards Kilcrohane - one of the toughest climbs of the whole trip awaited me - Seefin view. Worst part was that once I got to the top there was nothing but cloud coverage :(Zig zagged down to town and another B&B for the night - tent stayed in the bag again. Hot shower was heaven.

Day 10:



Killian Nolan

🚴 August 14, 2020 at 9:04 AM · West Cork, County Cork

Day 10 - made it to the bottom of Ireland!!



Distance	Elevation Gain
71.51 km	586 m
Moving Time	Avg Power
3:00:49	103 W
Avg Speed	Calories
23.7 km/h	2,576 Cal

Last day and end in sight! Out to sheephead to take a look, and then on to Durrus and the R591 for the final stretch. Tired legs but I left myself a shorter day here and only had 70km to cover in total and made it to Mizen Head by 1pm. The parents made it there ahead of me and had a round of applause and a cuppa waiting for me. Delighted to be able to throw the bike on the roof rack and not plonk myself on a saddle again for a long time!



THE END (for now!)