

Mountain Safety

The mountains of Connemara are beautiful but they can be treacherous. There are a number of steps that you can take to minimise the chances of getting lost or hurt.

Navigation Skills

- Before you go on the hills make sure you know how to navigate.
- Know how to use a map and compass, and if you have it a GPS.

Prepare and Plan

- Plan your route and leave your route plan, including start and finish points, estimated time of return and contact details, with an appropriate person.
- Consider the equipment, experience, capabilities and enthusiasm of yourself and the party members.
- Check the weather forecast and local conditions. The hills in Connemara can be major undertakings. Night encroaches early in the winter and weather changes very quickly due to the proximity of the Atlantic Ocean.
- Learn First Aid.

Wear Suitable Clothing and Footwear

- Wear suitable footwear with a treaded sole and proper ankle support.
- Wear proper clothing, it should be colourful, warm, windproof and waterproof.
- Always carry spare clothing and a hat and gloves (even in summer the tops and open hillside can still be bitingly cold, and it's always colder the higher you climb).

Food & Drink

- Carry plenty of water and a warm drink.
- Bring plenty of food including chocolate, dried fruit or similar high energy food to restore energy quickly. You may not need them yourself, but someone else may.

Bring the Right Equipment

- A map and compass are essential kit but you must know how to use them.
- A GPS is very useful long with a map and compass, know how to use it, but don't rely on it as the batteries may die.
- Carry a reliable watch, a whistle, a torch, spare batteries & bulbs, and a survival bag.

Mobile Phone

- Make sure your phone is fully charged
- Do not rely on a mobile phone to get you out of trouble. Signal coverage in the mountains of Connemara is very unreliable.
- If you are able to summon help using your mobile phone, keep it switched on so you can be contacted.

On the Hill

- Keep an eye on the weather and be prepared to turn back if conditions turn against you, even if this upsets a long planned adventure.
- Keep together.
- Allow the slowest member of the party to determine the pace.
- Take special care if youngsters are in the group, especially in dangerous places.
- Watch for signs of hypothermia, particularly in bad weather – disorientation, shivering, tiredness, pale complexion and loss of circulation in hands or toes, discarding of vital clothing. Children and older people are especially susceptible.
- If you prefer to go alone, be aware of the additional risk. Let people know your route before you start, stick to it as far as you can and notify them of any changes.
- If you think you need mountain rescue, get a message to An Garda Síochána (999/ 112) as soon as possible and keep injured/exhausted people safe and warm until help reaches you.

Emergency Procedures

- Be prepared to turn back if conditions are against you.
- If you have a serious problem, get a message to the Gardai (**112**) as soon as possible and keep injured or exhausted people safe and warm until help reaches you.
- If you cannot contact anyone, use **six whistle blasts** or **six torch flashes** to signal an emergency.
- Report changes of route or timetables to someone who is expecting you.

Camping Overnight

- Should hikers be intending to camp overnight in upland areas within our area of operations, it would be considered good practise to inform Galway MRT or the local Gardaí of the date, intended location and route, and car park location. Concerned citizens often report sightings of lights on the hill to which we are duty bound to respond to, initiating a late night search for the origins of the lights.