



## Guidelines for Mountaineering Ireland's Autumn and Spring Gatherings

- The Autumn weekend is usually the first or second weekend in October, to ensure reasonable daylight and also to leave a gap before the October Bank Holiday. The Spring Weekend takes place in April, depending on Eater Holidays from Schools etc.
- The weekend is based in a different part of the country each year. We endeavour to keep a reasonable balance between north, south, east and west.
- Ideally the venue should be in the uplands, so that these areas can benefit from the economic activity around the meet.
- The weekend is normally hosted by a local Mountaineering Ireland club. Usually clubs indicate in advance their interest in hosting a weekend (perhaps to coincide with a club anniversary) so the location often arises through an invitation from a club. Most host clubs establish a small working group or sub-committee to plan and organise the Autumn Gathering. Clubs planning to host a future meet are encouraged to attend an Autumn Gathering in advance to get a feel for the format of the weekend.
- The venue for dinner is selected by the host club. Some previous meets have been based in outdoor centres, but most times the venue is a comfortable, full-facility, mid-priced hotel. A Saturday night dinner is normally included as part of the programme. Dinner numbers vary but have been between 80 and 160 in recent years. Dinner is normally a set four course menu with a vegetarian option. Ideally dinner and entertainment cost should not exceed €35 per person.
- The hotel needs to have a meeting room available to accommodate up to 80 people theatre style, plus a couple of smaller rooms that would be suitable for workshops, lectures or smaller meetings. Many hotels do not charge extra for room hire once they get reasonable numbers for the dinner and some guests staying in the hotel. In negotiating with the hotel (or other venue) point out that they will get some publicity through the Mountaineering Ireland's promotion of the Autumn Gathering on the web and in the Mountain Log!

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- It is normally possible to negotiate a favourable rate in the hotel for 2 nights B&B (administration is easier if the hotel's weekend package does not include the Saturday night dinner). Getting a good accommodation deal from the hotel can make a huge difference to the success of the weekend. If the rate is favourable more people will stay in the hotel and it improves the atmosphere overall.
- Ideally there should be a range of accommodation options in the vicinity, B&B is the most popular form of accommodation but if possible hostel accommodation should also be available. Contact details for accommodation providers should be passed on to the MCI office for publication in the Irish Mountain Log or on the website.
- A joint meeting of the British Mountaineering Council (BMC), Mountaineering Council of Scotland (MCoS) and the MCI usually takes place in conjunction with Mountaineering Ireland's October Gathering. This grouping is referred to as the Mountaineering Co-ordination Group (or MCG). The MCI will cover the dinner cost for any visitors attending the MCG meeting. These visitors are not required to register for the meet; Mountaineering Ireland's Office will advise the number of visitors expected to attend the dinner. The MCG meeting usually takes place from 9.30 - 12.00 on Sunday morning. A meeting room to seat 12 - 15 people, boardroom style, is required for this meeting.
- The Autumn Gathering is normally publicised through the Irish Mountain Log (ideally the summer issue) and Mountaineering Ireland's website. The host club should prepare the advertisement in conjunction with the Mountaineering Ireland staff. Photographs of the local area are required for the Log and also for the website. The copy deadline for the summer Log is normally the beginning of May so this does mean planning well in advance.
- Notice of the Mountaineering Ireland's Autumn Gathering normally includes a booking form. Booking forms are returned to a nominated member of the host club (preferably somebody who has e-mail access). A registration fee of €10 is normally charged for participation in the weekend. The registration fee goes towards after-dinner entertainment, room hire, any costs associated with lectures or workshops and any other expenses incurred by the club, eg minibus hire, photocopying etc. The booking form should also include space for people to indicate whether or not they require dinner. Cheques for registration and dinner should be made payable to the host club.

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- Finances for the weekend should 'break even', that is neither the host club or the MCI will be out of pocket. Mountaineering Ireland will normally cover any shortfall that arises, but this should be notified to the Mountaineering Ireland Staff / Mountaineering Ireland Treasurer as early as possible. At the end of the weekend the local organisers should go through finances with the Mountaineering Ireland Treasurer and/or Mountaineering Ireland Staff.
- The host club is encouraged to keep in regular contact with Mountaineering Ireland Office.

#### **The weekend usually consists of:**

- Registration on Friday evening, followed by a short slide show or lecture of topical, local or general interest, often given by a member of the host club. Registration normally takes place at the hotel (or other main venue). The club will need two or three members available to deal with registration as well as one or two others to welcome people.
- Food should be available on the Friday night, ideally up to 10pm or later. A good bar food menu would be ideal.
- While many people arrive on Friday night, some, including members from the area may not arrive until Saturday morning, therefore registration normally continues from 9.00 - 10.00am on Saturday.
- On the Saturday local club members organise whatever activities they think appropriate. Ideally this should include walking and climbing and possibly a sightseeing option. It is recommended that clubs have a choice of walks on offer, to suit different levels of ability and also to ensure that group size does not exceed 15 persons. Where possible activities suitable for families should be included. Normally participants select their Saturday activity when registering and all groups would depart from the hotel (or other main venue) on the Saturday morning. If the host club is not a walking and climbing club, or does not have sufficient leaders available, this should be discussed in advance with the Mountaineering Ireland staff. In the past Autumn Gatherings have been hosted jointly by two clubs.

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- All Saturday activities should be planned so that participants can return to their accommodation, change and get to the dinner venue by 4.30pm. There is usually a Members' Forum from 5.30 - 7.30pm on the Saturday evening, followed by dinner at 8.00pm. The room for the Forum should be able to accommodate up to 80 people theatre style, with a top table for three or four people.
- The forum will be followed by the dinner. An after-dinner speaker may be suggested by the local club, but sometimes the after-dinner speaker is arranged by Mountaineering Ireland. The President of Mountaineering Ireland usually makes a short 'thank you' speech after dinner. Normally a member of the host club introduces the after-dinner speakers and advises people of any entertainment planned for later and activities scheduled for Sunday morning. Any kind of entertainment or social activity considered suitable by the host club will be welcomed after the meal.
- In addition to the MCG meeting, Sunday morning activities usually include workshops or seminars. In the past some Autumn Gathering have had themes, the theme can be suggested by the host club and could determine the content of any Sunday morning workshops.
- Activities normally end at lunchtime on Sunday, but sometimes the host club organises a short walk or sightseeing activity for the Sunday afternoon.

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