

Statement from Mountaineering Ireland & Mountain Training Board Ireland to voluntary and commercial leaders of Hillwalking and climbing in Ireland

The Irish government has further relaxed lockdown restrictions to allow for larger groups, with Mountaineering Ireland recommending groups of up to 15 people from different households to meet outside and extends to the complete lifting of travel restrictions on the island of Ireland as of 29th July 2020.

More detailed guidance on Phase 3 guidance, [here](#). This is the latest Government guidance and is live on 29th July. The key headlines are:

- *The lifting of travel restrictions,*
- *Larger groups permitted, but MI recommending up to x 15 people outside of your household can meet outside, whilst staying a minimum distance of 2 metres apart*
- *Note: Larger groups permitted, but MI recommending groups of up to 15, including trainers and coaches, while maintaining social distancing at all times.*
- *Maintain appropriate hygiene measures both personal and for equipment rigorously in line with wider guidance on hygiene, for example by using antiviral spray and washing hands thoroughly before and after use*
- *Maintain physical/social distancing of 2 metres as per government guidance*

Mountaineering Ireland & Mountain Training Board Ireland has considered the guidance above and believe it may now be possible for volunteer & commercial leaders to engage in led activity in Ireland subject to appropriate control measures. See further guidance on return to work safety protocols [here](#).

The latest general Irish Government update for Ireland is [here](#), (also see specific guidance for Northern Ireland [here](#), within the Ireland update it includes:

At all times, you should continue to adhere to strict social distancing guidelines when you are outside your home, particularly ensuring you are two metres away from anyone outside your household.

Here are five things you should know for Phase 3:

- **Travel:** *You may now travel across Ireland.*
- **Meeting other people:** *You may meet larger groups for social gathering, but Mountaineering Ireland recommending groups of up to 15 including leaders*
- **Shops:** *All retail is reopening. Shop locally, shop safely and support businesses in your community.*
- **Work from home:** *It is more important than ever to work from home where possible.*
- **Transport:** *Walk or cycle if you can. Only use public transport if you absolutely need to. Public transport capacity is limited because of social distancing requirements.*

Activities may not yet lend themselves to involve overnight stays (including camping) or the use of indoor venues for briefings or debriefs. Climbing walls or facilities may or may not yet be used.

Note: Larger groups permitted but MI recommending groups of up to 15, including trainers and coaches, while maintaining social distancing at all times, which is pertinent and relevant for led activities.

To make any decision on whether to go ahead with an activity, please consider the usual factors and include those additional factors brought about by Covid – 19 including government guidance, parking, mountain rescue service capacity. Our [guidance on safe practice in the outdoors](#) issued to Mountain Training Association members may also prove useful. Leaders are responsible for the safety of staff, and group and will need to have satisfied their own risk assessment about Covid-19 as well as having appropriate insurance cover in place.

Although MI & MTBI appreciates that leaders have a genuine need to return to work and will be keen to get back to leading a cautious approach will be necessary to both limit the spread of infection and respect local sentiment. As such providers in Ireland should take note of local information and advice from organisations such as their own membership organisations (AMI, BAIML, BMG and MTA), Mountaineering Councils (MI, the BMC, MS), National Parks & Wildlife Services, National Park Authorities, Mountain Rescue Teams and local Tourist Boards. Leaders must consider the reputation of our sector and act accordingly.

It is important that our network of leaders maintains the quality of what we do. We are presently considering how we can further support leaders in these challenging times and welcome dialogue.

I have created an email group of service providers and award holders. If you wish to be added to this email list, please confirm by return.

Finally, please note once again that this currently only affects leaders in Ireland. As the situation develops in other countries, we will issue further coordinated updates. The guidance for Ireland may change in line with the Government's advice and may need to be reversed if required. Please contact Jane Carney to discuss further as required.

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