



Autumn Gathering 2024

Hosted by

Sligo Mountaineering Club



Friday 11th – Sunday 13th October 2024

About Sligo Mountaineering Club

It was a humble beginning on April 28th, 1974, when a small group of seven individuals, united by their love for mountaineering and hillwalking, embarked on a journey up Knocknarea near Sligo town. This modest outing would mark the inception of what we now proudly call the Sligo Mountaineering Club (SMC). In those pioneering days, hillwalking was a niche pursuit, but today, it stands as part of a thriving outdoor community and a cornerstone of adventure tourism.

Formally recognised by the Mountaineering Ireland, SMC swiftly grew in both size and reputation. Fast forward to 2024, and the club has 140 dedicated members, a testament to the enduring spirit of camaraderie and exploration that defines our club.

Through the decades, SMC has remained steadfast in its commitment to responsible outdoor pursuits. Weekly hillwalks across the stunning landscapes of Sligo, Leitrim, and Mayo, punctuated by occasional weekend getaways to destinations like Kerry, the Mourne, and Wicklow, have become cherished traditions for our members.

As we mark our 50th anniversary year, we reflect on the milestones that have shaped our journey. In January, we kicked off the celebrations with a slideshow, revisiting treasured memories and highlighting the remarkable evolution of our club.

On Sunday, April 28th, 2024, exactly 50 years after that inaugural ascent, 53 SMC members, including five of the founding members, retraced those historic footsteps up Knocknarea. It was a poignant tribute to our roots and a heartfelt homage to the pioneers who laid the foundation for our enduring legacy. On Sunday, May 12th, 2024, we held a wreath laying event at the Millennium Cross on Kings Mountain, remembering those who loved the hills.

These commemorations are part of an ongoing calendar of events spread over the year. As part of our jubilee celebrations, we are honoured to host Mountaineering Ireland's 2024 Autumn Gathering. This event promises to be a fitting tribute to 50 years of adventure, friendship and exploration.



Autumn Gathering 2024

This year's Gathering will be based out of the Sligo Southern Hotel. The Sligo Mountains are easily accessible from the Sligo Southern Hotel, which serves as a convenient base for exploring the region. Registration for the weekend is €60 which is subsidised by Mountaineering Ireland and includes talks, activities, workshops, dinner on Saturday evening, a gift, and buses where needed. There is an alternative fee of €30 for those who do not want to attend the Saturday evening dinner in the hotel. The dinner on Saturday evening is always a fun and social part of the gathering and we would encourage as many participants as possible to attend. Members of Mountaineering Ireland can avail of the following discounted rate through the hotel if they wish to stay:

- Twin/double: Bed & Breakfast in the hotel €184.00 pp sharing for the 2 nights.
- Single room: Bed & Breakfast €184.00 for 2 nights plus €30 single room supplement per night.

Please let the hotel know that you are with Mountaineering Ireland's Autumn Gathering at the time of booking to avail of this special rate. Book before 14th Sept to avail of the special rate. Rooms after this date cannot be guaranteed.

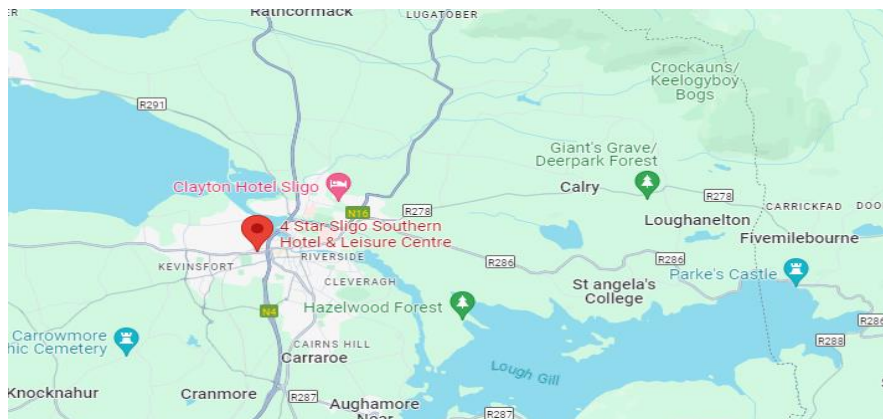
The weekend will start with registration from 6.30pm at the Sligo Southern Hotel where you will receive a gift and full details for the weekend ahead. The welcome talk will take place from 8.00pm. Saturday sees a full programme of activities including hillwalking, navigation and climbing in and around the Sligo mountains. Sunday morning will have a variety of workshops and a walk commencing at 10.00am.

Sligo Southern Hotel, Strandhill Rd, Sligo: +353 71 91 62101 | E: reservations@sligosouthernhotel.ie

Alternative Accommodation:

1. Rosemount - Homestay, Woodville Rd, Knappagh, Sligo, 0868190797, sheilla.gray@gmail.com
2. The Railway Hostel, 0876905539, paddy@therailway.ie
3. The Address, Quay St, 071-9144000, sligo@theaddresscollective.com
4. Riverside Hotel, Abbey quarters North, 0719194480, info@riversidesligo.ie

Or accommodation through the following sites: Booking.com, Airbnb



The Sligo Mountains

The Sligo Mountains, located in the northwest of Ireland, are a stunning natural landscape that offers a mix of rugged beauty and cultural heritage. The Sligo Mountains are characterised by dramatic landscapes, including limestone peaks, rolling hills, and lush valleys. The region is famous for its striking geological formations, such as the table-top mountain Benbulbin and the equally iconic Knocknarea.

Coach transport if necessary and car-pooling will be available from the Sligo Southern Hotel to the start and finish points of all walks. There are walks for all abilities and all will be led by members of the Sligo Mountaineering Club who are very familiar with the area and will be ready with local stories and insights! There will also be an environmental walk, a scrambling session, and a climbing on offer on the Saturday. Please read through the descriptions of all the activities outlined below before you start the online registration process as you will be asked for your activity selection when registering online.



Marking 50 years since the first walk of Sligo Mountaineering Club in 1974, the anniversary hike was held on the 28th of April 2024 on Knocknarea.

Programme of Events

Friday 11th October

16.00 – Historical walk – Streets of Sligo – those arriving earlier on Friday can stretch their legs on this gentle walk around Sligo town with members of the Sligo Mountaineering Club. The walk will start at 4pm and will take about 2 hours, giving people plenty of time to make it back to the hotel for registration. You can sign up for this walk when registering online.

18.30 – Registration in the lobby area of the Sligo Southern Hotel. There is a bar area in the hotel to grab something to eat when you arrive. If you cannot register on the Friday night, please contact caoilainn@mountaineering.ie.

20.00 – Welcome from Mountaineering Ireland and Sligo Mountaineering Club.

Followed by talk by Club Chairperson, John Lydon, welcoming people to Sligo and reflecting on 50 years of Sligo Mountaineering Club.

Saturday 12th October

A variety of walks and other activities will be held on Saturday, departing from the Sligo Southern Hotel between 8.30am and 10am. Please note that packed lunches are available from the hotel but must be ordered before 8pm on Friday evening (please book with hotel when you check in or beforehand). Please ensure you have walking gear for all weather with you, including hiking boots with good ankle support and gaiters as the terrain on some of the walks is steep and can be challenging. Please read through the descriptions of all the activities outlined below before you start the online registration process as you will be asked for your activity selection when registering online. Please note that a bus will be provided for some walks and other walks will require participants to carpool.

Choose from:

Difficult Walks

Walk 1. Dartry Mountains: Glencar Bog Road, Truskmore, Barytes mines, King's Mountain, Glencar escarpment, return.

Distance: 20km, Height Gain: 907m, Duration: 7 Hours

Walk 2. Glenade: Miners track near Eagles Rock, Tievebaun, Truskmore, top of Crumpaun corrie, return to Miners track by escarpment.

Distance: 18km, Height Gain: 515m, Duration: 7 Hours

Walk 3. Gleniff: Gleniff Horseshoe, Coillte car park, top of corrie, Truskmore, Tievebaun, back to Truskmore and descend to road.

Distance: 19 km, Height Gain: 837m, Duration: 6 Hours

Moderate Walks

Walk 4. Kings Gully Track, Civil War cross, top of Tormore Cliffs overlooking Glencar, return.

Distance: 14km, Height Gain: 590m, Duration: 5.5 Hours

Walk 5. Castlegal, Cope's Mountain, Crockauns northern escarpment, Hangmans Hill return to Castlegal via southern escarpment of Crockauns and Cope's Mountain.

Distance: 16km, Height Gain: 545m, Duration: 6 Hours

Walk 6. Lukes Bridge, top of corrie, 566m (Millennium Cross), Benbulbin Head, descent by track to Luke's Bridge.

Distance: 12km, Height Gain: 555m, Duration: 4.5 Hours

Easy Walks

Walk 7. Coastal walk. Cloonagh to Raughly Point.

Distance: 16km, Height Gain: 52m, Duration: 5 Hours

Walk 8. Archaeological walk in the Bricklieves, including some of Ireland's largest megalithic tombs at Carrowkeel.

Distance: 9km, Height Gain: 200m, Duration: 3 Hours

Additional Walks Added 20/09/2024

Walk 9 **Difficult** Dartry Mountains: Glencar escarpment, King's Mountain, Barytes mines, Truskmore, Glencar Bog Road return. (Car pool)

Distance: 20km, Height Gain: 907m Duration: 7 Hours

Walk 10 **Moderate** Coillte carpark, Benwiskin, top of corrie, cliffs of Annacoona, return

Distance 13k Duration: 5.5 Hours

Environmental Hike

Join Mountaineering Ireland's Access & Conservation Officer, Helen Lawless and Sligo Biodiversity Officer, Ruth Hanniffy for a hike with a focus on wildlife, habitats and how we can help protect the places where we walk and climb. This hike is ideal for club Environmental Officers and others who are interested in learning more about access and the mountain environment. The route will be decided closer to the time, but it will involve going up a mountain!

To help spread the knowledge shared on this walk, we would like to keep it to one person per club, ideally the Club Environmental Officer, or another member with an interest in the environment.

Scrambling Workshop

Our Training Officer Jane Carney will be conducting a scrambling skills course which will cover the use of ropes and climbing equipment to protect on steeper scrambling terrain. Ratio 1:4.

Climbing Workshop

Join our Youth Development Officer Ricky Bell at Tormore and explore the Glencar Valley limestone, doing some informal skill sharing and trying out some classic Irish rock climbs. **Participants must be competent leading or seconding in the E1 range.** Ratio 1:2.

Saturday Evening

18.30 Mountaineering Ireland Members' Forum – Sligo Southern Hotel

The members' forum is open to all Mountaineering Ireland members whether you are attending the entire weekend of activities or not. This is an open forum led by the Chairperson and CEO of Mountaineering Ireland. It is an opportunity for any member to make suggestions or ask questions related to hillwalking, climbing and the work of Mountaineering Ireland, either individually or on behalf of your club. It is a valuable information-sharing opportunity. Topics discussed are generally of interest to all individuals and clubs so we would encourage as many of those attending the Autumn Gathering as possible to come to the members' forum and bring feedback to your club afterwards. Tea and coffee will be served.

20.00 – Dinner in the Southern Sligo Hotel (please make sure to choose this option at registration if you would like to attend the dinner). If you would like to amend your booking to include / exclude the dinner, please email caoilainn@mountaineering.ie.

Sunday 13th October

10.00 – There will be a variety of workshops available on Sunday morning. You can sign up for these workshops when registering online.

1. Club Support Workshop

This workshop is open to club committee members and will look at a variety of topics which affect all clubs. This will be an opportunity to bring any concerns or topics you would like to chat to Ruth our Hillwalking Development and Clubs Officer about and an opportunity to hear from other clubs on club matters. If there is a particular area, you would like to discuss or get information on please send an email to ruth@mountaineering.ie beforehand so we can prepare the necessary material.

2. Club Training Workshop

This workshop will be a practical outdoor session that will focus on tips for teaching navigation, movement and leadership along with how to introduce training into your regular walks.

3. Workshop - National Outdoor Recreation Strategy - planning the future of outdoor recreation at county level

Facilitators: Helen Lawless, Mountaineering Ireland's Access & Conservation Officer
Trish Kane, Sligo's Outdoor Recreation Officer (recently appointed with the Sligo Sport & Recreation Partnership).

Helen and Trish will outline the opportunities arising from the National Outdoor Recreation Strategy 2023 – 2027, which is guiding the sustainable development and management of outdoor recreation across the country. Trish is leading the work in Sligo and currently engaging with relevant stakeholders to develop a county outdoor recreation plan and to establish a county committee to oversee the implementation of the plan. This is your opportunity to hear about the progress to date in Sligo, and to get a brief update on the preparation of similar plans in other counties.

Take a look at the National Outdoor Recreation Strategy, titled [Embracing Ireland's Outdoors HERE](#). Mountaineering Ireland was actively involved in the development of this strategy and we will provide advice and support if you are interested in finding out how this might be relevant to your area.

4. Walk – Knocknarea

Knocknarea is known for the large cairn at its summit, believed to be the tomb of the legendary Queen Maeve. A hike up Knocknarea rewards visitors with expansive views of Sligo Bay and the surrounding landscape led by members of the Sligo Mountaineering Club. This walk will start at Knocknarea car park and depending on the numbers for the walk it may be organised into two groups from different aspects of the mountain. This walk will last approximately 2.5-3 hours.

As always, there is the option to walk or climb independently on Sunday morning.

12.30 – Members can disperse once their workshop is over.