

Connacht MPC 2017 — Maumturks

MAP SHEET: - 37 (1:50,000)

MAGNETIC VARIATION 4 DEGREES

The Maum Turk mountains are situated in northern Connemara, and are part of a larger massif which spans the Galway / Mayo border. They are bordered to the north by Killary Harbour, to the east and west by the Maam and Inagh Valleys and to the south by the Connemara peat lands. Along with the Twelve Bens, they are made of rock known as Connemara Schists, although the upland portions are formed by quartzite, with schist and marble mostly restricted to the valley floors.

Situated as they are on the western seaboard they are exposed to all the Atlantic Ocean can throw at them. This means that there will probably be rain in six out of every seven days. The Maum valley has the fourth highest rainfall in Ireland. The Connemara Mountains can be dangerous at the best of times and a proposed route may be changed on the day if there are unfavourable conditions.

The word Maam is derived from the Gaelic word Mam meaning mountain pass. The Maam Valley, which extends from Maam Bridge north-westwards to Leenane, lies at the centre of a deeply dissected mountainous region. It is flanked on the south-west by the steep rocky ridge of the Maum Turk Mountains which rise to well over 2,000 feet at several points. To the north-east the valley is bounded by a group of lower, less hostile hills known collectively as Joyce's Country. The valley floor is relatively flat and covered in most parts with blanket peat or thin podzolic soils overlying glacial deposits. The valley is drained by two river systems, the major one being that of Joyce's, Bealnabrack and Failmore Rivers which flow into Lough Corrib east of Maam Bridge. A smaller unnamed river drains the northern end of the valley, flowing from the watershed at Culliagh Beg down to Killary Harbour at Leenane.

We have been granted access to private land by kind permission of the owners. As access is often a contentious issue in this area we would like to maintain the good reputation of the scout mountain events. We are asking the patrols to pay attention to a number of points in relation to the event.

Firstly, park only at the designated carpark (and overflow): there is an event on in the Inagh lodge that weekend, and they have asked us not to block up their carpark. The Western Way crosses a working farm and we do not want to block up their access point, this has been an issue recently with late arrivals trying to park closer to the camp site. When passing the houses on the road on the Friday walk in, and passing to the rear of the same houses as you go up the Western Way, be as quiet as possible. Lastly, please ensure you leave your camp site scrupulously clean to the Leave No Trace principles.

How to get there

From Galway head towards Clifden on the N59, and after Recess turn right onto the R344 and drive on until you reach the start location, a small car park opposite the fishing jetty, just before the Lough Inagh Lodge hotel.

FRIDAY NIGHT

Check in

Check in at the car park just south of the Lough Inagh lodge Hotel. If you are leaving cars here, make sure that you park properly and leave no valuables in the car.

There is parking available on the left side of the road before the Inagh Lodge Hotel. The Hotel has asked us not to use all of the parking along the road to their front, so please follow the directions of staff to park in the designated places.

Check in is between 20.00 and 23.00, where there will be a thorough gear check. The MPC is a zero impact programme, which means anything you bring in you must take out. This is your last chance to leave unnecessary packaging or gear behind.

IMPORTANT NOTE: No Dogs! Do not bring a dog with you, or we will need to send you home again. This is sheep country and the landowners do not allow dogs in this area.

Check in (L849 533) to Western Way (L859 533)

Follow the minor road NE to the point where it joins Western Way.

Please keep quiet: there are several farmhouses along this kilometre stretch, including landowners who have given us permission to access the area.

Western Way to abandoned farmhouses — camp site option 1 (L841 557)

Follow the Western Way NNW until you come to an abandoned farm. This is our primary campsite unless farming activities make it unavailable.

Again, please keep quiet, you are now passing behind the farmhouses: especially walk quietly across the metal bridges.

Abandoned farmhouses to Stream/track junction (L842 567)

When you encounter a fence across the track, cross the stile and turn immediately East (right) to pick up the old track, then follow the track heading due North.

At the stream junction, backtrack a little to start your ascent on the right hand side of the stream, to avoid the steep ground that is close to the stream.

Stream/track junction to Campsite option 2 (L852 565)

Staying on the right hand side of the stream, follow it up the valley to a rough track to the campsite.

Find a good spot, pitch camp, and settle in for the night.

SATURDAY

Have a good breakfast as there is some stiff climbing ahead today.

Pack up your site and have a staff member check your campsite to ensure it is clean and clear. Check out and start Saturday's route.

Campsite to Holy Well (L857 563)

Head East up the valley to the vicinity of the Holy Well, but stop short of crossing any fences. (You will not be able to actually get to the Holy Well, but as always in sheep country, it is important to leave the fences alone.)

Holy Well to Gowlanaurd (L856 562)

Ascend to the South to climb Gowlanaurd. This is steep ground, so take your time and move carefully.

Gowlanaurd to Binn Bhriocáin N top (L861 554)

Move South and then Swing South East to pick up the ridge leading up to Binn Bhriocáin N top .

Binn Bhriocáin N top to Letterbreckaun (L855 550)

Head South West into the col before a short ascent, then dog-leg towards the West to drop to Letterbreckaun summit. Follow your bearing on to the summit cairn.

This is a good opportunity to practise pacing to get your dog-leg right.

If the weather is clear you will have outstanding views across the Inagh Valley and Lough Inagh to the Twelve Bens.

Letterbreckaun to Spur (L863 548)

Taking a careful bearing, cross the flat ground to the West to pick up the top of the spur dropping to the ESE. Follow the spur down till the ridge levels off.

The next leg is over difficult ground so ensure you discuss your plans with the staff at the checkpoint here.

Spur to Barrlugrevagh (L865 547)

From the bottom of the spur, follow the ridge ESE to Barrlugrevagh.

Be very careful on this leg because the ground is difficult and drops steeply on either side. If there is low visibility be very accurate with your compass bearing, and proceed slowly and carefully.

Barrlugrevagh to Col (L871 542)

Contour around the high ground to the East to arrive at Maumeán then swing South to drop into the col.

If the weather is favourable, you can drop your rucksacks here and take the optional leg to Knocknahillion.

Col to Knocknahillion (L870 537) — optional

Climb to Knocknahillion to take in dramatic views to the East over Maumahogue.

Knocknahillion to col (L871 542)

Retrace your route back to the col and pick up your rucksacks.

Col to Campsite (L869 543)

From the col drop West to the campsite.

Take care in the descent because the ground is steep with crags, and it is the end of a long day.

There is limited space at the campsite, so pitch your tents close together and leave space for others arriving after you.

SUNDAY

Have breakfast, and head to assembly for the Scouts' Own and to collect your badges. Pack up, clean your camping area, and wait there for a member of staff to check your site is clear.

Proceed to check out, and check out of camp.

Campsite to Stream junction (L858 536)

Follow the stream down to the South-West until you come to a stream junction. Stay on the right hand side, and keep well back from the banks of the stream to avoid steep ground in the stream gully.

Stream junction to Bridge (L857 535)

Keep following the stream down, until you come to the bridge on the Western Way.

Bridge to Road (L859 533)

Follow the Western Way track to the South East until you meet the minor road.

Road to check-out (L849 533)

Follow the road West to the car park in the Inagh Valley, and check-out. Ensure a staff member checks you out before you leave.

Congratulation! You have completed the 2017 Connacht MPC.

Hoodies and T-Shirts are available to buy in the car park.

Please exercise caution when you follow the R344 back to your cars.