



Central West

HIGHLIGHTS

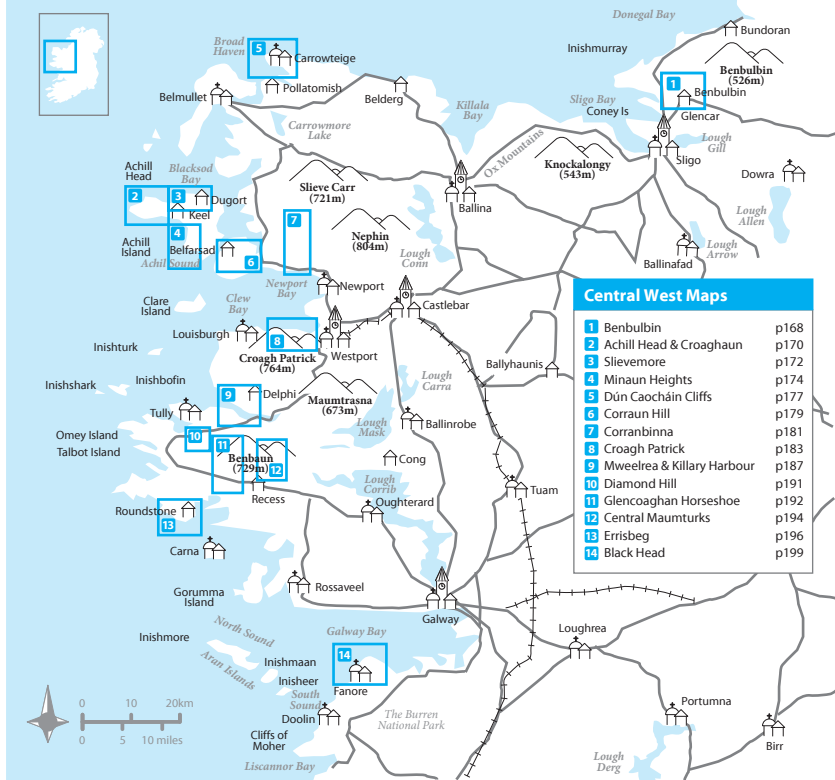
- Exploring some of Ireland's finest cliff walking around remote and peaceful **Dún Caocháin** (p176)
- Spending several days discovering the marvellous variety of routes on **Achill Island** (p169)
- Negotiating the rugged slopes of Mayo's highest peak, **Mweelrea** (p185)
- Wandering across the unique limestone pavements of the **Burren** (p196)

Highest peak in the region: **Mweelrea, Mayo, 814m**

The Central West of Ireland stretches from the Burren in County Clare, north through Connemara and County Mayo, to the hills of County Sligo. It is a region encapsulated by themes of both unity and contrast. The Atlantic Ocean is a constant presence, and the landscape is wild and rugged. At the same time, variety is everywhere, and distinct areas are readily identified according to their unique character. From the amazing limestone formations of the Burren to the sharp, crag-bound peaks of the Twelve Bens; from the country's most holy mountain, Croagh Patrick, to the dramatic cliffs of north Mayo; there is little in terms of Irish topography that is not represented within this region.

In these stimulating settings, walkers are presented with different opportunities from one area to the next. One day you could be exploring the finest collection of wildflowers in the country and the next, challenging yourself over a long, strenuous mountain massif. Yet, wherever you go, it's virtually impossible to avoid fine views of the mountains, glens and coastline. It would take years to fully explore a region that offers so much – all most people can do is take their time, open their senses and enjoy!

CENTRAL WEST



Central West Maps

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PLANNING

Maps & Books

The OSI 1:250,000 Holiday Map *West* neatly covers the region and is useful for general trip planning.

West of Ireland Walks by Kevin Corcoran describes 14 walks across counties Clare, Galway and Mayo, and has plenty of fascinating natural history and environmental information.

PLACE NAMES

Several parts of the region – particularly in the Burren, Connemara and County Mayo – are designated as Gaeltacht areas, where Gaelic is the first language written and spoken. In these places, road signs and place names are often written in Gaelic only, without the usual English translation. To facilitate

navigation through these areas, Gaelic names are given in relevant places in the text.

Information Sources

Fáilte Ireland West (☎ 091-537 700; www.discoverireland.ie/west; Forster St, Galway) is the tourism body responsible for counties Galway and Mayo.

GATEWAYS

See Galway (p203) and Sligo (p207).

SLIGO

The walk described in this section is located just north of Sligo town, in an area often referred to as Yeats Country in deference to the region's most famous son – the poet