

May 2015 - Issue 55

Irish Trekker



Sorrel Hill

Trekkers Mountaineering Club
Glenageary
Co. Dublin
www.trekkers.ie



Welcome

Welcome to recently joined members - we wish you many joyful trekking years.

- Regina Hipple
- Judy Humphreys

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Chairperson's Greeting

Shay Murran

The last few months have been very eventful and successful for the club in that the walks programme was very well subscribed to. On occasions, we had a waiting list which the committee addressed by closing off the list for new members to give the committee time to assess the situation. I am delighted to announce that the list is now open again and we have at least 6 applicants awaiting membership. In addition, we had two very successful overseas trips, one in Wales led by Owen McKeown and the second in the Sierra Nevada Mountains in Spain led by myself. We have another overseas trip coming up soon in France led by Brendan Bracken.

It is with pleasure that I announce that the committee has appointed **Owen McKeown as Training Officer**. Mountaineering Ireland have issued a recommendation that every club should have a Training Officer and we now comply with this request.

Upcoming Away Trips

June

Pyrenees with Brendan, Strong B

FOR YOUR DIARY

*20th June - **Summer Party***

@ Royal Yacht Club, Dunlaoghaire

Details soon by email



Congratulations

Congratulations to Aoife McKenna and Richard Dean on their recent engagement - we wish them a long and happy union.

Editor's Note

Welcome to Trekker number 55.

The font has been increased in this issue to increase the print size when printing in booklet form.

Thanks to all who contributed, particularly Richelle and Shay on the Sierra Nevada and Gaye on India. A great account by Emmet of the trip to Snowden will appear in the next issue. We include a new caption competition to stimulate your imaginative juices. There is also a summary of the Leave No Trace code as a reminder to us all. Thanks too to photographers particularly Owen, Myles, Breda, Joe, Gaye.

- Enjoy - Niall

Niall Humphreys; niallandeileen@gmail.com

Walking Holiday in the Sierra Nevada Mountains Spain - March 2015

Richelle Crowley and Shay Murran

The Alpujarra is a spectacularly scenic area of Andalucía lying along the southern foothills of Spain's Sierra Nevada mountains. Walking through Las Alpujarra is a delight at any time of the year with routes running through dramatic valleys and crossing mountain streams using ancient



packhorse bridges. This historical landscape is dotted with Andalusian white villages and Moorish ruins all linked by packhorse trails and ancient *acquis* or water courses. The unspoiled nature of the area means it abounds in wild flowers and unspoiled habitats. Walking there is relaxing and restful as we pass through olive and almond groves following well-trod routes through this historical landscape. The Alpujarra is ideal if you want to enjoy relaxed walking, taking in the dramatic scenery before a relaxing drink in a shaded area.

Thursday 19 March 2015

We eleven intrepid trekkers (Shay, Mary, Tom, Pat, Joe, Joy, Maire, Dympna, Richelle, Noreen, Terry) departed Dublin bound for the Sierra Nevada. Our destination was Lanjaron a picturesque village (pop.4, 000) set on the southern slopes of the Sierra Nevada (659m/2,162ft) and located 39 km from the beach/coast and 50 km from Granada. Lanjaron is famous for its high quality mineral water springs, which are used for one of the bestselling brands of bottled water in Spain. However the village is notorious for the greatest water

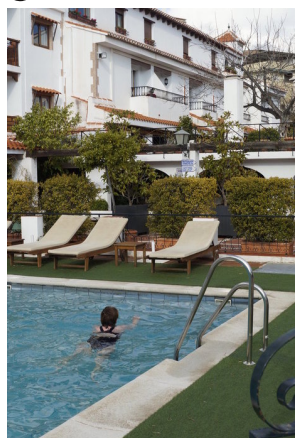


Lanjaron

battle in Spain held every midsummer! In addition, the World Health Organisation has recognised Lanjaron as one of the places with the greatest longevity for its inhabitants on the planet. We were met at Malaga airport by our guides Mike & Jane Hunt. We were driven along the smooth scenic coastal road passing by well-known resorts such as Nerja and Almunecar, finally stopping for lunch at a pleasant beachside restaurant. The food & service were extremely good, fish jumping

from sea to pan - well almost! The cost for 3 courses and a copa de vino or cana was €10. A welcome introduction to the good value to be had in Spain. Then we swung inland driving along the recently built motorway zig zagging upwards over spectacular bridges spanning deep ravines and gorges...miracles of modern civil engineering.

The Hotel Alcadima(3*) where we stayed was very centrally located with a beautiful garden south-west facing with an abundance of citrus trees, flowers and terraces overlooking the valley with views to the distant sea. In addition there was an outdoor swimming pool. All our rooms had balconies which overlooked all this. Not letting the grass grow under our feet, the first day's goal was a circuit of Lanjaron. So,



we followed Jane our driver and guide through the narrow streets and alleys lined with potted plants and tiny quaint courtyards, marvelling at the oranges and lemons on the branches and the birds enjoying (to our minds) the unusual windfalls!! Jane pointed out the more famous shrines set into recesses in the walls of houses and also the celebrated fountains. Each fountain had a name with a plaque in situ with a verse by a famous poet (such as Garcia Lorca) extolling its unique charm. We left the village behind us and climbed up to

the dizzying heights of the battlements of the old Moorish castle. Here we enjoyed spectacular views over the village, valley and the mountains. Wonderful fresh air combined with the aromatic scents from wild thyme, rosemary, fennel, lavender and eucalyptus...a welcome relief for some congested Irish sinuses. At the freshly lit log fire in our hotel bar we were introduced to Martin Riley our third guide and our leader the next day. Dinner later on was superb, not that it was really necessary after the marvellous lunch!!

Distance 8km. Height gained 100m

"In Lanjarón, oh mountains! Oh orange trees! I am reborn to your friendship." -Garcia Lorca

Friday 20/03/2015

Acequia Cecartas and the Parquet Natural

After a lavish buffet breakfast our group met Martin & headed out to the mountains direct from the hotel (with generous packed lunches). The walk took us to Huerta de Las Manjas (Garden of the Nuns) where there is a picnic area high above the Rio Lanjaron. From there we followed the picturesque acquis Cecartas traversing the hillside above Lanjaron. Passing fincas and cortijos (rural properties) this was

a chance to see the agriculture of the area. We then followed an old mule track up to a natural rocky amphitheatre on the hillside which at 1000m was the highest point of the day and also where we had lunch. Finally we descended through a pine forest on the edge of the Parquet Natural to the village. With almond blossom in the spring and autumn colours at the end of the year this is a great walk at any time. Although the sun was shining initially, the mother of all electric thunderstorms blew up. Very scary stuff!! Even back at the hotel there were short-lived power cuts. The stalwart trekkers completed their trek and nobody died. Saturated cold feet, sodden socks, ruined boots and freezing cold hands were the main misery. However the hotel facilities were more than adequate to deal with the crisis! As the severe rain almost swept away the road to their house higher up on the mountain our guides moved into our hotel.

Distance 10 km, height gained 400m.

Saturday 21/03/2015

CR7 and the Mountain Views

Mike and Jane drove the group to the Lecrin & Pedro Calvo area. The main vantage point, with spectacular vistas, was the Ermita del Santo Cristo Del Zapato. A tough climb and at times vertiginous. This walk makes use of the GR7 long distance trail to climb west of the village



through citrus, almond and olives up to the pine forests above the western Alpujarra and the Lecrin valley. We climbed to a church or shrine at the top of the mountain which gave us a wonderful view of the surrounding countryside. The church is very distinctive and can be seen from our hotel. We continued down a trail on our descent back to Lanjaron and took a well-earned break at “Fuente de Pedro Calvo”, which had a water reservoir in place, before we traversed the mountain side from which, on a clear day, there are views of the Rif Mountains of Morocco. We returned to the

cars and drove to a nearby town and had refreshments and tapas. The taverna had a policy of supplying each person who bought a drink with a tapas which were small burgers plus a bowl of stew. The atmosphere in the bar was great, similar to an Irish



country pub on a Saturday afternoon with the local farmers playing cards or dominos. All returned to the hotel to hear a welcome rugby result.

Distance 14 km, height gained 300m.

Sunday 22/03/2015

Lecrin Valley

The group was driven further up the Lecrin Valley and had a pleasant trek through almond and olive groves. The almond trees were in early stage of bloom and very colourful. This was a demanding walk, we climbed up to 1285 metres and came across many isolated cottages owned by locals who use them in the summer. There was no power supply in most except what could be gained by using solar panels or small electric generators. The water supply in most of the cottages comes from local streams fed by springs. It was channelled around the mountain sides and availed of by the residents. An interesting aspect



of the water supply is that each cottage owner has legal rights written into their land deeds to a certain amount of water from the spring. There did not seem to be a problem with this arrangement as all owners complied with the agreements. We walked

on part of the Sulayr Route which is a 19 day walking route across southern Spain and we came across a number of areas where gorse fires had damaged the local hillsides which is always a problem in southern Spain. In all we had a good day's walking and we returned to the hotel tired but happy. At one stage we had an opportunity to view our guide's house from a distance in an isolated area on the mountain side.

Distance 13 km, height gained 900m.

Meanwhile Richelle went to the 16th century Iglesia de L'Incarnation with a beautiful interior and a three storey silver baroque style screen behind the altar. The Church was very full mainly with young families. The mass itself was interactive with the youngsters very involved with singing and readings. A nun from the Vincentian order gave a PowerPoint talk detailing their worldwide missions, seeking

funds and vocations, lasting a good 35 minutes. When the time came for the Pater Noster a posse of youngsters thundered to the altar to participate almost flattening the poor padre!! Almost two hours later Richelle emerged blinking to enjoy a welcome coffee.

Monday 23/03/2015

White Villages and Granada

We awoke to a glorious blue sky, a sunny morning and perfect weather for sightseeing. We split into two groups, one heading off to the White Villages, as they had seen Granada, the other driving to Granada.

White Villages of Poqueira Gorge

This tour takes in three picturesque villages of Capileira, Bubion and



Pampaneira. We drove to the villages which are positioned high in the mountains and stopped at Capileira in the village square for coffee before taking in a tour of the village. The villages in this area are very pretty and the small houses really gave us a feeling of ancient mountain living conditions.

Among the small factories/shops we visited were a chocolate factory with plenty of samples and a carpet or rug factory. We enjoyed watching the workers working the looms to make the rugs, (shades of Ireland many years ago), and spoke with two



women workers who were from England and Sweden.

The last stop was a deserted village which was built in



1918. The electric power company decided to build a hydropower station and dam and in addition they built a village to accommodate the building workers and the power company workers. The village is now abandoned and the power station is run automatically. However it was most interesting to take in the complete village which was built in a deep valley beside the large dam.

Distance 6km. Height gained 100m.

Visit to Granada

A forty minute drive along a smooth highway with great views over the

plain and snow-capped Sierra brought us to Granada and the Alhambra. We had already booked our time slot (11am. a good time) and queued briefly to show our passports and collect the tickets. The Alhambra is a UNESCO World Heritage site taking its name from the Arabic for red castle. It is part fortress, part palace and water garden surrounded by trees on a hill. Many of the buildings on the site are over 1000 years old. The Generalife Palace and Gardens were truly spectacular. Perhaps on a par with Monet's Giverny?! All this splendour and history was making us really famished so we headed down the beautifully forested hill to Granada to the Plaza Nueva and continued up another hill to the Albaicin (the Moorish Quarter) situated on the hill opposite the Alhambra. We found an Arabic style restaurant lavishly furnished with Persian rugs, brass lamps, mini water fountains bubbling away and colourfully tiled walls and chairs covered in spotless cream damask. And the food lived up to the ambience. Never had such a spectacularly served chicken tagine! We dispersed then, some heading through the narrow cobbled streets of the Albaicin ascending to the Mirador de San Nicolas. Although it had started to rain, the vista to the Alhambra and Granada itself was really beyond spectacular. Of course we became more ambitious and were tempted to fit in more sights, like for instance the Cathedral. On returning to the hotel we had a swim in the pool which was very enjoyable but very cold.

Tuesday 24/03/2015

Walking to Alberwala

We woke to a bright, fine day ideal for walking. We drove to the village of Alberwala which is positioned high up on a mountain ridge. We walked down into the valley passing farms initially and as we climbed up the other side of the valley we passed an old water mill and moved on to citrus groves. The amount of oranges growing in the area was amazing and we sampled many of the oranges as we walked. We climbed down to a dry river bed and enjoyed walking through the



rocky river bed. Of most interest were two vertical furnaces built of brick with steel boilers inside. They were used to make perfumed liquids by filling the boilers with water, packing in various lavender plants and bringing to a boil thus making perfumed lavender liquids. Obviously a type of

entrepreneurship of old times. We came across two large herds of goats which are valuable in this area as they produce milk which is used for cheese and yogurt. The shepherds and dogs stay with the herds at all times. On arrival back to the hotel we had a swim before a good dinner and drinks. Very sadly also the day of “The Germanwings” plane crash in the French Alps.

Distance 15 km height gained 600m.

Wednesday 25/03/2015

Cachorras de Monachil

We had a forty minute drive from our hotel and parked in Monachil (an upmarket skiing resort). We followed the road, walking uphill & eventually turning into a trail that led through meadows, past clusters of olive and almond trees. Finally we passed through a small pine forest that opened into a valley looking up to a snow covered ridge! A stunning view to savour while we had a banana break.

And so ended the C walk!! There followed some challenging cliff traverses and descents (only a little challenging!) Some scrambling was necessary! There was an abundance of hellebores, broom, thyme, rosemary, lavender. Mike explained that these thrived due to their limestone habitat. We gradually wound our way down into the valley and cascading river. After negotiating some slippery stepping stones over this river we enjoyed our packed lunch in a sun drenched glade. The A walk continued after lunch with some tricky upward cliff walking, shades, well almost, of the “via ferrata”. Just watching where you put your feet and not minding the view we continued on blithely. The landscape here was rugged, rocky and lunar. The cliff dropped down to a gorge and we weren’t surprised to hear that this section was used as a location for some scenes in an Indiana Jones movie. The excitement wasn’t over, as we had to venture across a few very lengthy rope bridges spanning terrifying chasms. Boy, did they sway and wobble even for lightweight trekkers. The end of a fantastic day’s walking followed by coffee, beers etc. and tapas (constant refills) by a blazing log fire at a taverna at the end of the trail.

Distance 15 km, height gained 500m.

Back at the hotel we again gathered around a log fire where Shay, our leader, made a presentation to our excellent guides Jane, Mike and Martin. Mary then made a presentation to Shay.

After a breakfast buffet next day, Jane and Mike chauffeured us back to the airport. Overall, a successful and enjoyable walking holiday was had by all.

Travelling in India

Gaye Maguire

Last October I travelled to India with a group of 9 other like minded people to explore this fabulous country. I had been putting off visiting India for years. I prefer remote places when I'm on holidays and the thoughts of all the harsh realities were not very appealing.

Nevertheless, I have always found the country a fascinating one, and so we headed off to Delhi. The trip was through a UK company who employ local guides, and to say we got the best guide in the business may just be an understatement. Chetan ensured that our group of 10 (2 Irish, 2 Americans and the balance English) got the full flavour of India.

On our return, everyone wanted to know the same things, so here goes:

How did you cope with the amount of people (1.4 billion of them)? – this was the biggest issue, but I had no concept of what a massive country India is. Look at a world map and you get the idea. Of course



Delhi (especially Old Delhi) and Mumbai are absolutely crowded but that's part of the attraction. Each frame of your view always had someone in it – there is nowhere that you couldn't see someone else!

What was the food like? Absolutely delicious. We turned vegetarian for the trip and since 80% of Indians are vegetarian, we

were spoiled for choice. We tended to just place a random order and try everything. The portions were ginormous, by the end of the trip most of us were sharing all our meals. The food got more fragrant and delicious as you travelled south, with loads of fish from Goa and further South.

How sick were you? One afternoon of tummy upset and out of 30 days traveling, that was it!

What's it like for women travelling in India? There's been a lot of press about the dangers of Western women travelling. Like everywhere else in the world (including Dublin!), you have to be careful anyway. However, it was strange being constantly stared at by groups of guys just standing and staring. I only felt very uneasy once and that was on the first day. This attention reduced the further south we travelled. All of the women in the group covered up their arms/legs etc. so nothing was on show – thanks to Breda O'Hara for her tips on that score.

How did you find the poverty? You realise when you travel to places like this how lucky you are – we have no concept of what dire poverty is really. People live on very little, with very little and there were some very upsetting sights. Chetan had warned us of some of the ruses that people use to prey on westerners, so we were warned! However, seeing a child about 1 year old lying drugged on a pavement with a coat thrown over him, to make him look as if he was dead was not a sight I'd like to see again. His mum thought we'd give her more if we thought he was dead. Such an awful situation for her to be put in.



What were the trains like? Amazing – the train journeys and the sleeper trains were fantastic – you get a brown paper pack on each bed with spotless bedlinen and there's a knack for making the beds – very well designed benches. I slept for about 10 hours each time so missed all the action! On one of the adjoining carriages, two rucksacks were nicked, and there were some peeping toms on our 2nd journey which was not pleasant for some of the group. Aside from this though, it was great fun. A guy near us had alcohol on the train and the cops arrived, took the drink, the name of his employer and reported the offence to the employer (pretty nifty way of keeping the peace – if you want to keep your job!).

Some facts & figures:

6000 km travelled,
3000 km by train (the other 3000 by bus),
10 states visited, 16 cities/towns/ hotels,
Countless – the number of temples we visited,
0 – number of days sick,
30 days travelled.

What were your highlights? There were very many – I guess the Taj Mahal stands out. I had no idea of the size, the intricacy of the design on every inch of it, and just the fact that someone loved someone that much, that they could mark that love so beautifully – yes, I said it blew my mind. The hills in Ooty were stunning and we had some lovely walks in early morning cold there, beaches in Goa where we skived off for the day and just lay on sun loungers reading (and it actually rained!!), spending a night travelling around the backwaters in Kerala on a houseboat, visiting so many beautiful temples both Buddhist, Hindu and other places of worship, The Amber Palace in Jaipur for the colours and scenery, Varanasi for the spiritual essence (though I also have to class it as my low light as well – it is a difficult place to visit – people come to die here and there's a sense of decay).

Would we go back? Absolutely! Not sure when – there are so many places to see. Some of you may remember Hardick who was a member of the Trekkers for a while, and he's a perfect example of the type of person we met – warm, friendly, great fun with a massive smile. Thanks to Breda for all the information she sent, and for keeping me enthralled with her emails while she spent her time there.

The Itinerary

New Delhi	Old town and Fort
Varanasi	Sunrise and sunset on boat on the Ganges
Agra	Taj Mahal at sunset and 5am and The Red Fort
Jaipur	Amber palace and Bollywood movie
Ranthambore	National Park Tiger sighted
Bombay	Largest laundry in the world
Aurangabad	Stunning Ellora and Ajanta caves
Bijapur	Worst hotel on trip with padlocks on the doors
Mysore	Incense factory and amazing City Palace
Hampi	UNESCO town with 120 historic sites
Goa	Celebration of Dewali (Hindu festival of light)
Mangalore	Stopover, nothing of note
"Ooty"	Hill station with tea plantations, stunning mountains
Cochin	Chinese fishing nets, fish meals, ethnic dancing
Allepey	Amazing new hotels & restaurants
Kovalam	Beautiful beach with lighthouses at both ends

Recommended Reading:

Shantaram by Gregory David Roberts
Dervla Murphy's On a Shoestring to Coorg

Caption Competition

Another chance to exercise your imagination.

Best entry (in the eyes of the Committee) wins a free bus-ride.



Gossan Stones - Paddock Hill

The Gossan stones (possibly from garsún for boys) at Paddock Hill are unassuming, the taller of the two being slightly over one metre.

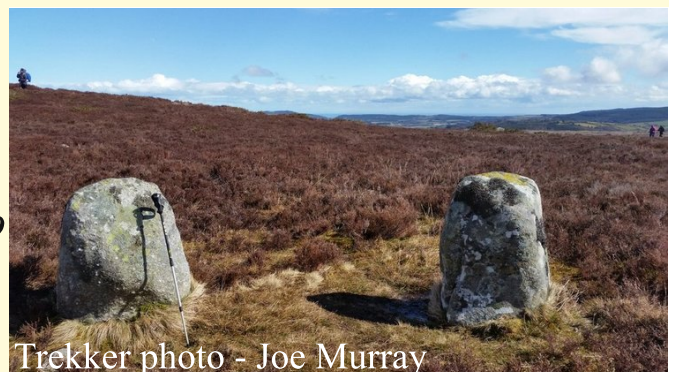
They are however, apparantly, megalithic, and their orientation is particularly interesting. They are aligned north to south so that looking directly through them is due east. In this direction lies the Devil's Glen. Chris Corlett, noticing the dip of the Devil's Glen in the distance surmised that on the morning of the equinox (20th March or 22 September) the rising sun should appear through the Devil's Glen as viewed from the Gossan Stones. In 2005 he visited the site at 6.30 in the morning to confirm that this was the case & produced photos to prove it.

Perhaps some Spring or Autumn equinox we will arrange an early morning trip to confirm it ourselves!

See Chris Corlett's account: <http://www.knowth.com/gossan->

Also for grid ref. and gps co-ordinates:

http://www.megalithomania.com/show/site/1679/the_gossan_stones_stone_pair.htm#map



Trekker photo - Joe Murray

Leave No Trace

As Trekkers, we always follow the principles of "Leave No Trace".

Referred to on the Mountaining Ireland website these are spelt out in

<http://www.leavenotraceireland.org/seven-principles>

Plan Ahead and Prepare

- Before you go check, where possible, if access is allowed.
- Respect any signs, regulations, policies and special concerns for the area that you wish to visit.
- For environmental and safety reasons, and to minimise your impact on other users, keep group numbers small; split larger parties into smaller groups.

Be Considerate of Others

- Respect the people who live and work in the countryside.
- Park appropriately - avoid blocking gateways, forest entrances or narrow roads.
- Take care not to damage property, especially walls, fences and crops.

Respect Farm Animals and Wildlife

- Observe wild animals and birds from a distance.
- Keep wildlife wild, don't feed wild animals or birds.
- Farm animals are not pets; remain at a safe distance.

Travel on Durable Ground

- To avoid further erosion, travel in single file in the middle of tracks.
- Where there is no track, disperse to prevent the creation of new tracks.
- Avoid places where impacts are just beginning to show.

Leave What You Find

- Respect property. For example, farming or forestry machinery, fences, stone walls etc. Leave gates as you find them (open or closed).
- Preserve the past: examine - without damaging - archaeological structures, old walls and heritage artefacts e.g. holy wells, mine workings, monuments.
- Conserve the present: leave rocks, flowers, plants, animals and all natural habitats as you find them. Fallen trees are a valuable wildlife habitat; do not remove or use for firewood.

Dispose of Waste Properly

- **"If You Bring It In, Take It Out"** - take home all litter and leftover food (including tea bags, fruit peels and other biodegradable foods).

Minimise the Effects of Fire

PHOTOS

