

2006 YUCPC trip to County Clare, Ireland

Introduction

What do you get when you mix some cavers, two cottages and the beautiful land of Ireland in the summer? An incredibly amazing two weeks, that is what!

Members on the trip:

- Dominic Galliano
- Debbie Flowers
- Jess Walsh
- Nicola Topham
- Ade Turner
- Chuck Holder
- Laura Bennett
- Richard Gover
- Matt Ewles
- Kevin Francis
- Andy Vick
- Gary Douthwaite

Trip Report by Debbie

After travelling by a combination of car and ferry, or plane, 12 hungry cavers were rewarded by the beautiful scenery of Doolin, County Clare in southern Ireland, where the shimmering Atlantic was framed by the green gentle countryside. However, despite the warm and streaming sunlight, we creatures of the underworld decided to go and explore the wonders and delights of the local caves.

The caves varied immensely from the familiar ones we were used to in York. Although cavers are heard of and welcomed, the caves themselves seem barely touched and their undamaged and preserved nature made them seem more special somehow. We were exploring where none of us had ever gone before, and seeing things only a small handful of any humans had ever seen!

The majority of the caves were formed by streams, and encouraged horizontal passages rather than the deep drops associated with the Dales. The majority of the caves offered us spectacular sights, with cave formations definitely in

abundance. The minerals of the area caused startling stripes of red, orange and cream to stand out in contrast to the grey rock, and a whole passage in Cullaun Five cave was called Red Carpet Passage, due to the amazing coloured flow all along the floor. Fournarooka Cave also stunned us all with the sheer amount and impressiveness of the cave formations it displayed. Masses of clear and white stalactites adorned the ceiling, with curtains and gour pools and colourful calcite flows creeping in at every angle. It really was spectacular. Most caves had something interesting to offer scenically, whether it be mineral formations, interesting shaped rock where the stream had previously ran, or huge caverns where the previous ceiling had long ago fallen off.

Not all the trips were delicately decorated however, one notable cave being Coolaugh River Cave where an epic mud fight amused us all for quite a while. Trying to throw mud while standing in it knee deep without falling over or being hit is definitely not an easy task, although incredibly fun! Also caving is not complete with the characteristic crawling / squeezing / wriggling. Thankfully we didn't miss out on this, and explorers of Fergus River Cave and Pollballiny definitely had their fair share!

Although caving was the focus of the trip, we also spent complete days outside in the sun, a highlight being a trip to the local Aran Island Inishmór. The large island was beautiful and most of us opted to see most of it by hiring bikes. Old forts, ice cream and beaches were visited by all and very much enjoyed. Then the evening was spent with a brilliant bonfire and barbeque on the beach watching both the sun and moon set. The Cliffs on Moher were also an alternative to caving and were absolutely stunning, and also supplied us with opportunities for abseiling and sea-cave exploration. And lets not forget the local pubs emanating beer and lively diddly-diddly Irish music!

I think everyone would agree that the two weeks were fantastic. The caves were great, featuring some of the most beautiful and spectacular sights most of us had ever seen, and also offering the fantastic fun of crawling, climbing, stomping and sliding. The cottages we stayed in were ideal, the countryside stunning, and the company superb. Bring on the next trip asap!