ROWING IRELAND

Ionian Sea adventure with Gráinne Mhaol Rowing Club



A 15-year introduction to Gráinne Mhaol Rowing Club...

We are a mixed geder club based in Galway. Gráinne Mhaol Rowing Club was established in 2010 as the Galway University Boat Club alumni club and has been part of the Galway rowing community for more than 15 years, with origins encompassing competitive alumni athletes, masters rowers, recreational and coastal/adventure rowers.

From Lough Corrib to the Venetian Lagoon, Amalfi Coast, Paris, Puglia, Sicily and Lago d'Iseo, and now the islands and coastline of the Ionian Sea, Gráinne Mhaol continues to show that rowing is much more than a sport: it is a way to explore, travel, connect, challenge yourself and experience the world from the water.

We feel fortunate to have had the opportunity to experience the beautiful landscapes, warm welcomes and rich cultures of the places we've visited.

Jen Cunningham,
Club Captain, Gráinne Mhaol Rowing Club

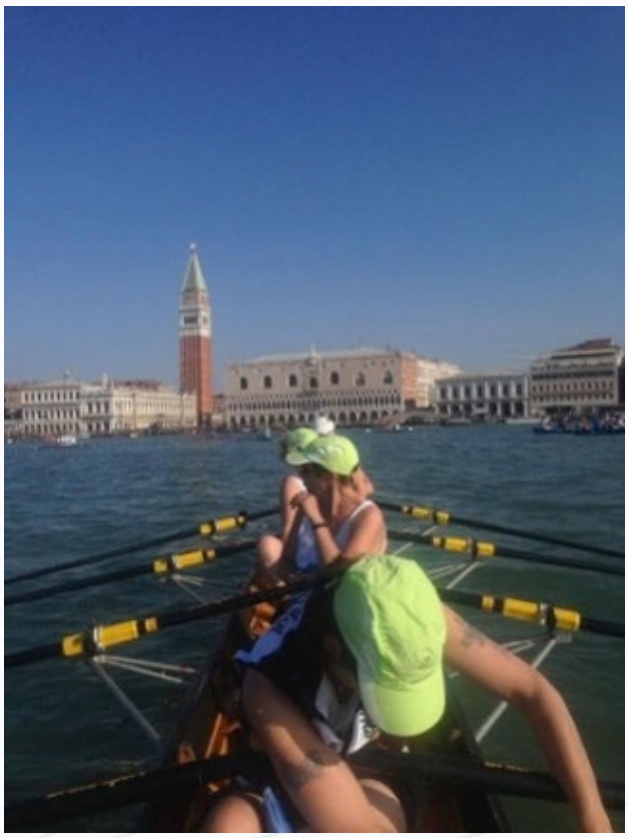
Touring together, rowing further

Gráinne Mhaol Rowing Club has a proud tradition of river, lake and coastal rowing. We've rowed the Rivers Seine, Lot and Douro; explored the Venetian Lagoon and the stunning waters of Lago d'Iseo; and followed spectacular stretches of the Amalfi, Sicilian and Puglian coastlines, as well as the beautiful coastline of Limassol and the Thermaic Gulf in Thessaloniki. Each journey has allowed us to discover these destinations from the water, rowing the Adriatic, Aegean, Tyrrhenian, Mediterranean and Ionian seas. Each tour has been a chance to train, explore, and make lasting memories together and make new rowing friends. Closer to home, we are truly blessed with access to the beautiful River Corrib and the vast Lough Corrib. While much of the upper lake remains largely unexplored, we venture out whenever conditions allow to discover its many islands and varied landscapes, using our coastal quads and all important charts to navigate and explore the lake.

Lough Corrib, Co. Galway

Venice Vogalonga, Italy





The 2026 Ionian journey

Gráinne Mhaol Rowing Club explored the Ionian Sea in September 2026 over two days, with morning rows, lunch on shore and time to swim.

A Different Kind of Rowing

Coastal adventure rowing presents different challenges from traditional flat-water rowing. Crews must be prepared to adapt to changing wind, tides, swell, sea conditions and coastline, while remaining comfortable and confident in an open-water environment.

Participants on coastal tours need to be experienced rowers and capable sea swimmers. The Ionian tour was designed for rowers comfortable with distances of 25–30 km in a day, while remaining able to respond to changing conditions on the water.

Safety is central to the club's coastal rowing programme, with routes and plans adapted according to weather and sea conditions and alternative arrangements made whenever conditions are unsuitable.









The 2026 Ionian journey

The latest adventure saw two coxed coastal quads take to the Ionian Sea for two contrasting days on the water.

The first day's approximately 18 km route from Igoumenitsa to Megali Ammos Beach near Sivota followed the coastline south through sheltered bays and around dramatic headlands.

Conditions could hardly have been better. The sea was remarkably calm, allowing both crews to make excellent progress while taking in the spectacular scenery. The day finished with the unusual luxury of bringing the boats right onto a beach directly in front of our hotel — a first for the club.
Day two took the crews into the Sivota Islands, where they rowed through crystal-clear turquoise waters, past hidden sea caves and secluded sandy coves.

The crews made the most of the setting, dropping anchor several times to swim ashore, snorkel and sample delicious Greek food. It was less about simply covering the kilometres and more about experiencing the islands from the water.

Together, the two days provided a perfect balance of coastal rowing, adventure and exploration, with the island tour proving one of the highlights of the trip.
The programme was operated in partnership with Rowing in Greece, whose experienced local guides provided the coastal rowing boats, local knowledge and safety support, together with the transfers required for the rowing programme.

And, as seems to happen on so many Gráinne Mhaol tours, there was a little luck of the Irish involved. The following day, the wind picked up considerably, creating conditions that would have prevented the crews from getting out on the water. It was a timely reminder that, however experienced the crew, the sea always has the final say.





What recreational and tour rowing means to our club..

Over the past 15 years, Gráinne Mhaol has taken its boats well beyond traditional regatta courses, building a remarkable collection of rowing adventures across Ireland and Europe. Highlights include three days of island-hopping on the stunning Venetian Lagoon, racing the 10 km PalermoRema coastal race, taking part in the Venice Vogalonga, rowing part of the Amalfi Coast and completing the Traversée de Paris et des Hauts-de-Seine several times.

The club was also specially invited by our friends in Canottieri Sebino, celebrating their 110th anniversary. The club is based between Bergamo and Brescia in Northern Italy and situated on the stunning Lago D'Iseo, where we were invited to join their crew relays circumnavigating the entire lake to mark the occasion.

A coastal tour of Puglia last year provided another special experience, with Gráinne Mhaol given permission to land its boats at a protected nature reserve involved in sea-turtle rescue and the cultivation of Posidonia seagrass, helping to protect important marine habitats.

Closer to home, the club completed a full circumnavigation of the entire Lough Corrib for charity, covering approximately 130 km over six rowing stages and raising €5,000 for Corrib Mask Search and Rescue. It should also be noted that another club favourite is the wonderful 2-day tour in Graiguenamanagh, with Brian Roberts (Irish Rowing Adventures), This connection with the environment continues to be an important part of the club's activities. Gráinne Mhaol has close links with local environmental group Corrib Beo and has also secured several EU projects focused on adult coastal rowing awareness, mature women in sport, job shadowing with EU partners and coastal touring safety projects. **These experiences have helped shape a distinctive club ethos: using rowing to explore new places, engage with local and international communities and develop a deeper connection with the waterways and environments around us.**

GET IN TOUCH

Gráinne Mhaol Rowing Club
ROWING IRELAND
Postal Address: "Mariposa", Gentian Hill, Salthill, Galway, H91 NXW8

Jen Cunningham, Club Captain, 087 766 0818