Crean Challenge 2026

Dear Scout,

Thank you for showing an interest in the Crean Challenge Expedition. Please find enclosed an information booklet and application form. Places are limited to 32 Scouts. Experience, skills, and geographical spread will be considered as part of the selection process.

PLEASE NOTE: This event is by selection only. **Applications will close at 5.00pm on the 30th May 2025**. All applicants will be contacted in due course after that date.

Yours in Scouting,

The Crean Challenge Expedition Team.

Information Pack 2026

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Event Details

The Crean Challenge Expedition is an annual event based on the experiences of Irish explorer Tom Crean. It is for scouts aged from 13-15 years and takes place over an eight-month period, culminating in a week-long expedition to Iceland. It aims to promote teamwork in patrols, to achieve a common goal, and to personally challenge everyone to identify and achieve personal goals.

Participants will develop practical skills which are tested throughout the duration of the challenge, such as Route Planning, Navigation, Hill Walking, Icelandic Weather Systems and First Aid.

This expedition will introduce participants to new cultures and experiences, pushing mental and physical limits, and act as an introduction to friends that will last a lifetime!

The cost of event is yet to be finalised - est. to be €1350.00 This includes all 4 training weekends, flights to and from Iceland, accommodation, transport and board in Iceland and Crean 2026 apparel

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The Crean Challenge is a brilliant opportunity for scouts to learn and develop through new and testing environments in an atmosphere of fun and friendship.

The Programme Department is aware that many groups have never had a scout apply for this event and we're conscious that cost could be a factor. With this in mind, we're pleased to announce that a bursary is available to one scout from a group that has never previously had a youth member on this event.

We hope the availability of this bursary will encourage groups to support the application of a scout who would personally develop from the experience and also share their learning with their troop and group.

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Training Weekends

Weekend One: July

The first training weekend is focused on team building. This will be Skills focused weekend with an emphasis on working within your patrols.

Programme: Map Reading, Orienteering and Teambuilding bases.

Location: Castleconell Scout Campsite ,Castleconnell Co. Limerick

Date: 25th – 27th July 2025

Weekend Two: September

The second training weekend will be based around hiking and navigation. It will be structured with a long day on the hills on Saturday, to assess individual and patrol skills in a learning environment.

Programme: Hiking and information sessions

Location: Burncourt Scout Centre Co Tipperary

Date: 26th – 28th September 2025

Weekend Three: November

The Third training weekend will be an extension of the second with a focus on testing the participants' skills that they have built on from the first weekend and their own training hikes Participants will be expected to work within their patrols to achieve various talks throughout the day.

Programme: Hiking and patrol challenges

Location: Lough Dan Scout Centre, Lough Dan, Co. Wicklow

Date: 14th – 16th November 2025

Weekend Four: January

The final training weekend will be the final preparation before our trip to Iceland. We will have various information sessions and patrol challenges.

Programme: Final preparations and information sessions

Location: Cronin's Yard, Carrauntoohil, Co. Kerry

Date: 16th – 18th January 2026

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The Expedition

The group will depart Ireland to spend one week in Iceland. Over the course of the week, participants will be challenged by physical demands, climate, and terrain. Using the training that they have completed in preparation for this expedition, they will be required to work together to overcome these challenges.

The initial few days of the trip will be a learning experience to allow participants to familiarise themselves with some of the equipment that they will use throughout the expedition. On top of this they will be shown how to trek in the difficult snowy terrain and will learn about the impact of adverse weather systems in Iceland.

They will then take part in a two-day expedition trekking to Icelandic Mountain huts, spending 1 – 2 nights in these basic lodges and returning to Reykjavik for the final mentor reviews and Awards Ceremonies. Location: Úlfljótsvatn Scout and Outdoor Centre

Date: 13th February 2026 to 21st February 2026

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Logbook Information

The Crean Challenge, by its very nature, is designed to be adventurous and challenging. It will push you beyond your boundaries. To achieve in this event, you will need to use your initiative and your wits and put into practise the skills you have gained through Scouting.

Each Participant will be paired with two mentors during the first training weekend, who will help guide and assist you in completing this prestigious challenge. Throughout the next 6 months, you will set yourself goals and milestones which your mentors will help you achieve!

Participants will record their activities throughout the challenge in a logbook. The logbook should be a unique personal account of the overall journey, which can be told using word, images, drawing, clippings, or anything else you can think of!

Logbooks help…

- To provide a written record of the event
- To demonstrate that you have achieved the assessment criteria
- To note things that went well and things that did not go well
- To communicate your progression and preparations to your mentors
- To report progress on your personal projects
- To show scouts and future generations of scouts in your home troop what you have achieved
- In providing a record upon which you can build other projects
- To document hikes and route cards which can be used for future reference

Participants will be shown how to complete a logbook by their mentors during the training weekends.

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Training Hikes

Before attending the first training weekend in September your Section Scouter must sign off on your Navigation Skills and Abilities.

You must complete four training hikes prior to the Expedition in February. Participants will plan and log hikes with a route card, sketch map, weather reports, planned menu, photos, and hike reports.

Two of these hikes should be undertaken between the first and second training weekends. Two more hikes should take place between the second training weekend and final training weekend.

All hikes must follow the Irish Mountain Training Board's Quality Mountain Day. Such a day consists of the following:

- The participant is involved in the planning and investigation.
- The Hike would last at least 5 hours and take place in an unfamiliar area.
- The majority of time should be spent above 500m, distance should be over 16km with over 600m of height gain during the day and cover a variant of terrain.
- The use of a variety of hill walking techniques.
- Adverse weather conditions may be encountered.

Projects

Throughout the duration of the challenge participants will complete two projects.

Projects are based on the Scouting SPICES and mentors will help participants complete these projects throughout the event.

Each project takes approximately 8 weeks to complete, including planning, research, and reviewing. Participants will meet with their mentors several times, during the training weekends and during the expedition in Iceland.

Past projects complete by participants have included:

- Local group histories, spirituality in Iceland, becoming a Scouter in a younger Section.
- Starting new sports such as running, cycling, swimming, martial arts and yoga.
- Learning new skills such as woodworking, baking, instruments, and languages.
- Studies regarding renewable energies, and climate action projects.

The Event in Past Participants' Own Words

Rossa Moore 3/40/41 Donnybrook CC 2025

My name is Rossa Moore, and I took part in the Crean Challenge 2025. During the first training weekend I knew no one, but by the second one in the Galtees I knew I had made friends for life. Our third training weekend in Lough Dan was cancelled because of the weather. I was so disappointed to have one of the 4 training weekends cancelled. The final training weekend in Carrauntoohil was really hard but it gave me the resilience (that I didn't know I needed) for Iceland. My week in Iceland was quite different to everyone else's as on the first hike on the first day I sprained my ankle. I was initially absolutely devastated but little did I know this would still be an adventure of a lifetime. From the first minute to the last day of my injury I was taken aback by the kindness of people, whether it be the Icelandic (I had just met) who took my bag immediately after my injury, or Morgan and Miceala looking after me by bringing me ice packs, waking up extra early to bring me to the hospital so I wouldn't miss culture night, or driving to come and pick me up. I also have to mention how my mentors and my patrol gave me every aid possible to complete the Expedition. Even though I didn't manage to get the pin, or see snow, Crean Challenge without a doubt was the best experience of my life. I have now made lifelong friends and memories, and I learnt that sometimes the adventures you have are the ones most unexpected. I cannot recommend it enough as it truly is an experience that has changed my life.

Oscar Mullane, Waterford 35th Coppercoast, CCE 2024

After nine wonderful years of scouting the Crean challenge is by far the best event I've been on, from the lifelong friendships and the skills you'll learn on the training weekends and in Iceland I'd recommend it to anyone who loves hiking and new experiences in scouts.

From summiting Carrauntoohil in the snow to digging a hole for a teepee tent in Iceland you won't be able to count the number of new experiences along the way. I looked forward to every training weekend counting down the days to learning new skills in the Irish mountains such as trudging through overflowing rivers and night navigation through the Wicklow mountains.

For me the culture night, the main expedition and seeing the aurora borealis where peak points during Crean

One of my mentors said that I would be a different person by the end of the expedition, and he was spot on. You will learn to confidently navigate through the mountains; you'll have lifelong friends from all over Ireland and great confidence going forward in life.

P.s. don't eat the shark (or the yellow snow)

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Pearse Brewster 146th Firhouse, Dublin CCE 2022

I've been a scout all my life and without question it's the best adventure I've ever been on. Nothing can compare to the breath-taking Icelandic mountains or the (not very) delicious delicacies of whale blubber and fermented shark. I made friends from all over Ireland, and the bond we now share after surviving a hike through a blizzard is indescribable. The lessons I learned, both in Scouting and life in general, have proven to be valuable ones. When we started training, I barely knew how to use a map and compass, but by the time we were in Iceland I was confidently navigating through the unfamiliar snowy terrain. I won't lie though, it was tough at times, it is a challenge after all, but with out a doubt in my mind it was worth the effort; and the mentors were always there to support us. I am extremely lucky to have had this experience, I hope you get to as well. I can't recommend it enough!

Conor Burns, 1st Dromore Newry, Brian Boru, Co. Down, CCE 2019

"From dancing on the peak of Nóneggjar (an Icelandic mountain) during a snowstorm in pink knee-high socks and fluorescent neon swimming trunks, to peering out of self-built snow-huts at the Aurora Borealis as it boogied across the northern skies, the Crean Challenge offers more than just the "adventure of a lifetime".

As one of the scouting explorers who partook in the 2019 Crean Challenge, I can still distinctly remember the salty vinaigrette-like taste of our supper of whale blubber, lamb eye and sheep head – a delicatessen we indulged late one night after an intense avalanche training session with our new Icelandic friends. As we traced Tom Crean's 1913 solo walk across the Ross Ice Shelf, this incredible week-long adventure taught me more about survival in the great outdoors than any amount of Bear Grylls' videos ever could!

The friendships, endless laughter and incredible memories will stay with me for a lifetime – enjoy every second of it!!!"

Sarah Ryan, Ferrybank, Waterford, CCE 2017

My name is Sarah Ryan and I took part in the Crean Challenge Expedition 2017. The Crean Challenge was one of the best experiences of my life. I met the most amazing people from all over Ireland and I learned so many new things. I found it fascinating, meeting the Icelandic people and you really get an opportunity to experience their culture. It definitely is not for the faint hearted! I did find it physically and mentally challenging, but it is 100% worth your effort! And money! The mentors are so supportive, and they literally help you every step of the way. There's not many people that can say they walked 32km across Iceland in waist-deep snow or abseiling on a cliff over the coldest lake in Europe. Between the training weekends and Iceland itself I made memories for a lifetime. It gave me a lot more confidence in myself and my abilities. It's a life changing experience and I genuinely can't recommend people do it enough!

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Sadbh, 14th St. Patrick's, Co. Galway, CCE 2019

"Hiya, I'm Sadbh and I participated in Crean in 2019, which was one of the best experiences of my life! Whether it was bonding with my patrol on the training weekends, or testing out traditional Icelandic food, the entire journey was certainly an adventure.

I went into the first training camp knowing no one there, feeling a little nervous, but as soon as we all started chatting, I knew we would get along great! Once we were in Iceland, I loved every minute of it, as the entire experience was completely new and hard to picture before we were there.

My favourite part was definitely the feeling of accomplishment on the expedition. Once we could see the huts in the near distance, there was no stopping us marching on the final leg - apart from the river I ended up in... long story! In general, I also loved being able to grow closer with all the participants and learning new skills I didn't even know existed. If you have any interest in hiking, I would highly recommend going on this adventure, and meeting a bunch of amazing people on the way!"

Sean Hoban, Ferrybank, Waterford, CCE 2015

"I have been involved in scouts for 15 years now and have been on a lot of events nationally and internationally. The Crean Challenge is easily the best event I have ever been on. It really is a challenge but the friends and experiences you make along the way are unreal. Travelling to Iceland was such an adventure and the practice hikes at home were so fun to complete. What is really cool about it is that you don't necessarily need to know anything about mountaineering to do the challenge as there are opportunities to learn all the skills needed during training weekends. It's been years since my participation in the event and it's still one of my best memories as a scout".

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How to Apply

Applications are now Open HERE!

Please Note: The following documents are required to be uploaded HERE for your application to be valid:

1. **Scouting CV:**
   Please upload your Scouting CV HERE – *Please name the file as your Full Name*

2. **Letter of Recommendation from Group Leader: Please click HERE for template.**
   Please upload your Letter of Recommendation HERE – *Please name the file as your Full Name*

3. **Video (Max 3 Mins) Outlining the following.**
   a. Why do you want to partake in the Crean Challenge?
   b. What do you hope to gain from completing Crean Challenge?
   c. Briefly talk about your hiking Experience.

   Please upload your Video HERE – *Please name the file as your Full Name*

Applications will close **at 5:00 pm on 30th May 2025**. All applicants will be contacted in due course.

Applicants should ideally have completed the Hillwalking Level 5 Adventure Skill badge; however, this is not a requirement to apply. ***Participants must be under the age of 16 on the 21st of February 2026 to be eligible to participate in Crean Challenge 2026***

Any queries please contact the Crean Team at: creanchallenge@scouts.ie