



escapes in europe

Jerome O'Loughlin makes the gems of Ireland's north-west accessible via his vegetable-fuelled tour service. **Luke Bell** is signing up.



For Jerome O'Loughlin, vegetable oil goes a long way – literally. It helps get the eco-minded Irishman around his cherished Emerald Isle...green in every way!

Ireland Eco Tours is the first minibus and tour service in Ireland to use environmentally friendly vegetable-oil fuel. The vegetable oil used is sourced in Ireland and is considered carbon neutral as the emissions produced from running the bus on vegetable oil are re-absorbed by the rape seed crops the following year.

The company was set up by Jerome in 2007. He was brought up in a green-minded family in Belleek on the Fermanagh/Donagall border. Yet, it wasn't until he left university that he really began to feel that working with and caring for the environment would become a significant part of his life.

"After university I went across and did some conservation work in Costa Rica," Jerome remembers. "It was a great experience and triggered in me a real sense that caring for the environment was something I really wanted to do in my life."

Costa Rica was just one of many destinations Jerome has travelled to. With a backpack on his shoulders and a map in his pocket, Jerome sensed his calling.

"I've done a lot of travelling and have been on a lot of tours. I felt that being a tour guide would come pretty naturally to me as I'm always being told I've got the gift of the gab!" claims Jerome. "I

guess that's where the idea for Ireland Eco Tours was born really. I love interacting with people and I've always cared about the environment, so why not combine the two?"

The tours take customers through the remote lands in the north-west corner of Ireland: mountains, lakes, sandy beaches and rolling hills. The landscape is unspoiled and achingly beautiful. There are a variety of tours on offer, ranging from a Donegal day-trip to an eight-day eco adventure. The multi trips offer great variety with bike rides in the countryside, mountain hikes and surf lessons at the beach. Eco accommodation and breakfasts are included in the tour price and you will be in great hands with guides Jerome and Pete on the fun-fuelled eco bus.

But Jerome's not sitting on his laurels. Now that his eco-tour business is established, he plans to set up a cycle-tour firm in Belfast. "Cycling is the original eco-transport and a particular passion of mine. Plus it's a great way to see the sights," he enthuses.

With his infectious and upbeat personality, Jerome will strike a chord with any customer. So, if you are thinking of holidaying a little closer to home, visit Ireland Eco Tours' website for some inspiration. Get out of the kitchen and into the wild, but remember to take the vegetable oil with you!

For more information go to www.irelandecotours.com or telephone Jerome on +44 (0)28 6865 9171.