Ireland: Cork & Kerry

Tour-Only Itinerary

Ireland's southwest coast stretches before you as you leave the graceful arc of Ventry Beach and set off on the Dingle Way. Verdant fields slope down to meet black cliffs, lashed by the pounding surf. Far to the south rise MacGillycuddy's Reeks—Ireland's highest mountains; due west lie the Blasket Islands, with the unbroken Atlantic beyond. Walking Ireland's wide-open landscapes on this walking tour in Cork and Kerry has filled you with a sense of boundless freedom. This land breathes history, from the prehistoric beehive huts beside your path to Gougane Barra's ancient lakeside monastery. Even more timeless is the warmth of the Irish people: your welcoming innkeepers, fellow walkers, and the spirited denizens of Dingle's pubs, where good music and good cheer last long into the night.



Highlights

Follow the Dingle Way along pristine coastline enjoying views of the Blasket Islands and passing by Neolithic *clochán*, beehive-shaped drystone huts.

View the countryside through Irish eyes, as your friendly hosts share their knowledge of the area during stays at locally owned accommodations.

Admire the same view of the Killarney Lakes that impressed Queen Victoria in 1861, as you walk from Ladies' View further into Killarney National Park.

Explore the beautifully preserved 19th-century country estate of Muckross House, one of County Kerry's famous historic homes.



Activity Level

This tour is one of our Self-Guided Walking Adventures, rated easy to moderate, with an average of 4–9 miles per day, with options on some days. The terrain includes daily elevation gains and losses. Walks are on well-maintained dirt trails, either packed or with loose rocks and roots, as well as grassy paths and sandy beaches. This diverse and extensive itinerary includes some of southwest Ireland's most stunning attractions, such as Gougane Barra Lake and Forest Park, Killarney National Park, and the Dingle Peninsula; reaching these locations requires transportation of 1–2 hours. The tour offers full days of walking as well as two layover days with fishing, horseback riding, whale watching, cycling, or shopping options, to name just a few. Remember: preparation is the key to ensuring your tour readiness; the more

you walk or participate in aerobic exercise prior to your trip, the more you will enjoy your experience!

DAY 1

Arrival in Cork. Transfer to Gougane Barra. Orientation meeting upon arrival at your hotel. Optional walk: Gougane Barra Forest Park

2.5 miles, easy

From your arrival point, you are met and transferred to the small hamlet of Gougane Barra in western Cork, a wonderfully pristine part of Ireland. Your lakeside family-run hotel overlooks St. Finbarr's Oratory on a small island. Surrounded by heather-clad mountains, the lake is a beautiful and peaceful place, and there is a lovely walk available to stretch your legs.

Accommodation: Gougane Barra Hotel, Gougane Barra
Included Meals: Dinner

DAY 2

Gougane Barra Forest Park

6 miles, easy to moderate

Awakening to lakeside tranquility and a full Irish breakfast, today, you explore the Gougane Barra Forest Park, which offers a range of trails of varying distances and degrees of difficulty. Each one has a specific theme that best showcases the spectacular panoramas of mountains, valleys, streams, and lakes. Developed as a forest park in the early 1960s and officially opened in 1966, the Gougane Barra valley and lake owe their dramatic geology to glacial origins. The Forest Park of over 350 acres was planted in the late 1930s over what was once farmland. Now, you walk amid impressive stands of lodgepole pine, Sitka spruce, and light green Japanese larch. Finbarr, the founder of Cork, established a monastery here in the 6th century as well as a hermitage on the small island in Gougane Barra Lake (Lough an Ghugain), which can be reached by a short causeway.

Accommodation: Gougane Barra Hotel, Gougane Barra
Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 3

The Sheep's Head Way

6.6 miles, moderate, 500-ft. elevation gain and 1,000-ft. elevation loss

Today, stroll along a section of the Sheep's Head Way, a long-distance trail over 93 miles (150 kilometers) in length, which passes along the coast of the Sheep's Head Peninsula and throughout the general Bantry area. Walking here, you'll discover a peaceful, unspoiled peninsula which has some of the most beautiful scenery in all of Ireland—low, rugged hills and cliffs that feel wonderfully remote, despite being no more than a few hundred meters from roads at any point. After a short taxi transfer from your hotel, the route starts at a pass along the spine of the peninsula and follows a stretch of this ridgeline, with extensive panoramas of the Atlantic. To the north, the Caha Mountains and the Beara Peninsula are clearly visible across Bantry Bay, and to the south is the more-sheltered Dunmanus Bay, with its pretty villages nestled along the shore. At the end of your walk, you arrive at Bantry House, a stately 18th-century mansion set in formal gardens on the southern shore of Bantry Bay. It was the seat of the Earls of Bantry and has extensive gardens, as well as a pleasant café, on the grounds. Admission here is included on your tour (please note that Bantry House is closed on Mondays from April 14–May 31 and September 1–October 31; please avoid starting your tour on a Saturday during this time frame should you wish to visit Bantry House on Day 3). Your final destination of the day is just a few miles away in the quiet coastal village of Ballylickey.

Accommodation: Seaview House Hotel, Ballylickey
Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 4

Derrycunnihy Church to Killarney

7 miles or 9 miles, easy to moderate, 850-ft. elevation gain and 1,050-ft. elevation loss

Today begins with a transfer (approximately one hour) over Moll's Gap, with the famous Ladies' View over the Killarney Lakes, and to the start of your walk at Derrycunnihy Church on Galway's Bridge. The route takes you through the Killarney National Park, home to the only natural herd of red deer in Britain or Ireland. You continue through the mountains to the Torc Waterfall and on to Muckross House and Abbey, where Queen Victoria paid a visit to the Herbert family in 1861. Today, many of the rooms in this

magnificent mansion have been restored to their original Victorian splendor, and between the months of April and July, the mature rhododendrons of Muckross Gardens are in spectacular bloom. Adjacent to the house are the Muckross Traditional Farms, which portray the farming methods and way of life in a typical rural community of the 1930s. The workshops, shops, and restaurant are all worth exploring. From here you transfer to your accommodation for the next two nights in Killarney.

Accommodation: Cahernane House Hotel, Killarney
Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 5

Layover day in Killarney

At your doorstep you have a plethora of things to do in and around the town of Killarney, from a range of walks, to castle touring, town strolling and shopping, bike riding, or pony trekking. Perhaps one of the best-known natural sites is the Gap of Dunloe, a narrow mountain pass between Macgillycuddy's Reeks and Purple Mountain. About seven miles in length from north to south, within it are five lakes—Coosaun Lough, Black Lake, Cushnavally Lake, Auger Lake, and Black Lough—all linked by the River Loe. Connecting the first two lakes is the Wishing Bridge, so-called because it is said that wishes made while upon it are destined to come true. Nearby is Ross Castle, standing on the shore of Lough Leane. The original home of the O'Donoghue Ross Chieftains in the 15th century, the castle has been magnificently restored. The site holds evidence of human habitation going back 9,000 years, with one of Europe's earliest Bronze Age copper mines dating back some 4,500 years. One walking option here is a 90-minute route around the archaeological sites of Ross Island. You can also walk into the vibrant and charming town center of Killarney, with the tall-spired St. Mary's Cathedral, as well as a Gothic Franciscan church. While in Killarney, enjoy the town's long tradition of late-evening shopping.

Accommodation: Cahernane House Hotel, Killarney
Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 6

The Dingle Way: Ventry to Dunquin

7.4–9 miles, easy to moderate, 900-ft. elevation gain and loss

This morning's destination is the Dingle Peninsula, just over an hour's drive away. A first short stop is at the fabulous Inch Beach, made famous in David Lean's 1970 film, "Ryan's Daughter." The drive takes you past Dingle (you'll have plenty of time upon your return to explore the town and surroundings) and on to Ventry Beach, where you begin the day's walk. The route starts along the beach before rising slightly to skirt the base of Mount Eagle. Here, spectacular views open up over the Blasket Islands and the Atlantic Ocean as you pass beside Neolithic *clochán*, beehive-shaped drystone huts. The walk ends at the excellent Blasket Islands visitor center, which provides an informative overview of the communities that once lived on the remote islands. You soon return to Dingle, perhaps for a pint of Guinness at one of the town's 52 pubs, before walking to dinner at a restaurant of your choosing.

Accommodation: Benners Hotel, Dingle
Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 7

Layover day in Dingle

The town of Dingle invites exploration—with its colorful houses, lively fishing port (and resident dolphin, Funghi), pubs and restaurants, quaint shops, and livestock market. Nearby are local walks, as well as boating options. A vibrant town of only 2,000 residents, it is a flourishing tourist, fishing, and agricultural center. Boat trips from Dingle include whale-watching excursions and deep-sea fishing. As a market and fishing town, its numerous pubs not only provide delicious food and drink, but some also specialize in selling items from Wellington boots to sheets, blankets, and fertilizer! The town is a center for traditional music, and you can listen to it in the pubs in the evening. By day, perhaps visit the Dingle Record Shop on Green Street, or the Dingle Music School, dedicated to making Irish music as accessible as possible. Pottery is another local craft.

Accommodation: Benners Hotel, Dingle
Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 8

Departure from Tralee

After breakfast, an included transfer from Dingle to Tralee is provided (60–90 minutes) to make your train or bus connections.

Included Meals: Breakfast

What's Included

	Tour Only
Boutique accommodations	✓
11 meals: 7 breakfasts and 4 dinners	✓
Detailed water- and tear-resistant Route Notes and maps	✓
Orientation meeting with a Country Walkers representative	✓
Local representative available 24/7	✓
Scheduled taxi and luggage transfers (Please note: If unable to walk, it is possible to transfer with your luggage from one accommodation to the next at no additional charge.)	✓
Entrance fees and special events as noted in the itinerary: Entrance to Bantry House & Garden	✓
Travel assistance available 24/7 provided by Allianz Global Assistance	✓
Access to Self-Guided Flight Concierge—Ask our knowledgeable team to find flights that sync perfectly with your planned trip.	✓