

Ireland: Cork, Killarney & Dingle

Tour-Only Itinerary

Is there a better way to greet the day? Mist rises over rock-strewn pastures and smoke billows from the chimneys of whitewashed cottages near Killarney. Slinging your backpack over a shoulder, you stride outside onto the country lane. A stream rushes by as you climb the green glacial valley towards the Gap of Dunloe. Come afternoon, you'll be crossing the arched stone bridge at Lord Brandon's Cottage for a picnic, then boating over to Ross Castle. But you're in no hurry. This is a week for savoring tales and walking windswept beaches along the legendary Wild Atlantic Way. Breathe deeply and admire rugged Atlantic waves crashing into weather-beaten cliffs. You're on a walking tour in Ireland, and taking things slowly is a way of life.



Highlights

- On a jaunty horse-drawn cart (or by foot if you prefer), enter the narrow Gap of Dunloe—a rugged mountain pass with beautiful scenery.
- Beneath the ever-changing skies of Killarney National Park, view elegant mountains and stunning lakes as you walk along the scenic Kerry Way.
- Embark on a cruise to Ross Castle while learning of Ireland's most well-known visitors.
- Walk the legendary Wild Atlantic Way and experience the power of the Atlantic Ocean as waves crash beneath remote, weather-beaten cliffs.
- Explore the life and birthplace of Irish seaman and Antarctic explorer Tom Crean, Ireland's famous unsung hero.

On all Guided Adventures you can count on ...



Expert local guides to introduce you to the best of your destination.



Gracious accommodations that are a clean, comfortable home away from home.



Off-the-beaten-path places you'd never find on your own.



Experts to handle all the details.



A maximum of 18 fun-loving fellow travelers to share the journey.



Flight + Tour Combos include plane tickets, airport car service, and pre- and post-tour accommodations.



Delicious, authentic multi-course meals—virtually all are included.

Activity Level

This tour is one of our Guided Walking Adventures, rated easy to moderate with an average of 2 to 5 hours of hiking per day. The trails feature a combination of paved roads and easy terrain, mixed with moderate hills, moorland, and uneven footpaths. Due to Ireland's climate, the footpaths can often be wet and muddy.

DAY 1

Join your Ireland: Cork, Killarney & Dingle tour

Muckross park gate to Muckross House; 2 miles, easy. Muckross House to Old Weir Bridge; 4 miles, easy

After breakfast on your own, meet one of your guides at Cork's Imperial Hotel at 9:00 a.m. (South Mall, Cork, Republic of Ireland; Tel: +353 21 427 4040). To reach the hotel you can take a taxi from Cork airport into the city (approximately €20), or travel on Bus Eireann, which provides frequent and direct coach service between Cork Airport, Cork City Center and Cork Bus Station (approximately €5; travel time is around 25 minutes, depending on traffic; for more details go to buseireann.ie).

Following a short introductory meeting, travel via private bus from Cork to Killarney (a journey of approximately 90 minutes, depending on traffic). Your first destination is Killarney National Park. Ensure you are prepared for a day of walking, as the bus will continue with your luggage to your hotel after leaving you at the park entrance. Here, you meet your second Country Walkers guide and enter the stunning vistas of the Killarney Lakes with their impressive mountain backdrop. You'll walk through a lush meadow, along a river and through the woodlands to reach the lakeshore. Across the waters, admire the tree-covered slopes of Tomies Wood, stretching upwards towards the peaks of the Shehy and Tomies mountains. Continue along the shoreline through a delightful woodland glade until you come across the magnificent manor, Muckross House.

Your lunch today at the manor's Garden Restaurant is included. Once you've finished, you have the choice of enjoying a stroll through magnificent displays of ornamental shrubs, flower beds, and wide expanses of manicured lawns or continuing with a walk around Muckross Lake. This walk takes you through ancient woodlands, over Brickeen Bridge, and across Dinis Island to the Meeting of the Waters and the Old Weir Bridge. All the while, you are surrounded by wonderful views, small lakeside beaches, and rocky coves.

You'll then meet your bus and drive to your hotel in Killarney—your home for the next three nights—collecting non-walkers at Muckross House on the way.

Take some free time to settle in, then get to know your fellow travelers and guides during a welcome reception and dinner this evening.

Included Meals: Lunch, Dinner

DAY 2

Discover the Gap of Dunloe. Independent exploration of Killarney

Kate Kearney's Cottage to Lord Brandon's Cottage; 7 miles, easy to moderate

This morning, you'll drive to Kate Kearney's Cottage, the site where the legendary 19th-century beauty made and sold an illicit brew "very fierce and wild, requiring not less than seven times its own quantity of water to tame and subdue it." Now a popular shop and pub, it's also the starting point for today's walk. You ascend a steady paved incline and traverse a spectacular glacial valley, known as the Gap of Dunloe. Your trail parallels a mountain stream over rugged terrain lined with massive boulders until you reach the pass between Macgillycuddy's Reeks—Ireland's tallest mountain range, at 3,414 feet—and the Purple Mountains. Then you'll descend into the Black Valley. Throughout your journey, you'll have a horse-drawn jaunting cart at the ready if you want a break.

A lakeside picnic awaits you at Lord Brandon's Cottage. From here, you'll board open boats and cruise to Ross Castle, a 15th-century tower house, as your boatmen regale you with tales of Napoleon, King Brian Boru, and others who have passed this way.

This evening, shuttle into Killarney for dinner on your own. Perhaps you'll discover the "the legend that is in the brew" on a visit to Killarney Brewing Company in downtown Killarney. The brewery specializes in what is claimed to be Ireland's finest range of small-batch craft beers, all named after local myths and legends. You'll be sure to have the chance to mingle with locals and catch live music in one of Killarney's lively pubs.

A vibrant town surrounded by the stunning beauty of the National Park, Killarney is home to historical sites and lively pubs. It's also an ideal base for exploring the nearby mountains and lakes.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 3

Glenbeigh and the Kerry Way

Start of walk to meet minibus; 3 miles, easy or Start of walk to Glenbeigh; 5 miles, easy to moderate.

Afternoon Glenbeigh to Curra Hill; 2 miles, easy

Today's walk brings you to the northern part of the Kerry Peninsula. After a short drive, your bus will leave

you at the trailhead—a quiet, paved country road circling Seefin Mountain. As you walk, enjoy spectacular views over Lough Caragh. At the end of the road, you have the option of rejoining the minibus and meeting the group in Glenbeigh or walking to Glenbeigh up the mountain on a footpath through Windy Gap. This path is part of the Kerry Way, a 135-mile walking route over old droving paths and coach roads.

Upon reaching Glenbeigh, enjoy free time for lunch on your own in this quaint town.

After lunch, you have two options: You can shuttle two miles to Rossbehy Creek and take a short walk along White Strand, a beautiful sandy beach on a small peninsula stretching into Dingle Bay. Or you can walk along the banks of River Behy and follow the Kerry Way through the sloped woods of Curra Hill, then shuttle down to Rossbehy Beach.

Tonight, before an included dinner, you'll meet Denis Kissane, a local friend who will give a nostalgic presentation about his childhood in "The Old Bohareen." Then enjoy a tour and tasting at Killarney Brewing and Distilling Company in nearby Fossa, where you may sample some of the oldest craft beers in Southwest Ireland. An included dinner will follow, where chefs pair locally-sourced ingredients with their homemade spirits and brews.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 4

Walk through Killarney National Park into Killarney and Ross Island

Castle Ross Hotel to Killarney; 2 miles, easy. Loop walk around Ross Island; 2 miles, easy

After breakfast, pack your luggage, as today you depart Killarney for Dingle. First, though, you'll take a very short drive to Castle Ross Hotel for a walk in Killarney's beautiful parklands. You can stop at Killarney Cathedral, then venture into town for shopping or join your guides for a walk around Ross Island. More of a peninsula than an island, Ross Island is heavily wooded with a network of paths leading to attractive viewpoints overlooking Lough Leane. Also visible are remains of former copper mines throughout the ages—some remains date back 4,000 years to the prehistoric Bronze Age, and others are from the 19th century.

You'll have free time for lunch in Killarney on your own before continuing on to Dingle Peninsula.

Tonight is free for you to explore lively Dingle Town, a 10-minute walk from your hotel or relax at the generously appointed property. Dinner is on your own. Perhaps enjoy the freshly prepared dishes at your hotel's Coastguard Restaurant (reservations required) or at the more casual Baskets Bar. Dinner is on your own.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 5

Annascaul Village and Inch Beach. Independent exploration of Dingle Town

Three Peaks of Annascaul; 4.5 miles, moderate or Annascaul Village Loop walk; from 2 miles, easy

Start your morning with a leisurely breakfast overlooking the blue-glass waters of Dingle Harbor. Early risers may choose to set forth into Dingle Town, a village that has been described as an artistic girl who's out for rowdy fun. Browse eclectic shops along the shoreline and watch as fishermen bring home their morning catch. Afterward, you travel 15 minutes to Annascaul. This authentic sleepy Irish town at the foothills of the Slieve Mish Mountains is set in the heart of the Dingle Peninsula. The village is also the celebrated birthplace of Tom Crean, the famous explorer who accompanied Ernest Shackleton on three Antarctic expeditions. With beaches to the south and mountains to the north, Annascaul is a walker's paradise.

You can view it all during today's trail options. A moderate loop traverses past rolling sheep pastures and the area's famed "three peaks," a series of rises and descents that include Brackloon and Knockafeehane. Enjoy spectacular and serene views throughout this invigorating trek – a patchwork of green farmland dotted with farmhouses amidst the striking beauty of southern County Kerry and the Dingle Peninsula. Or discover Annascaul in greater depth and follow a river path from the village, crossing scenic bridges and passing historic landmarks, including a memorial and statue to Tom Crean himself, erected in front of the South Pole Inn, which he opened upon his return from his adventures.

After lunch together in Annascaul, you visit impressive Inch Beach, a wild and wind-swept sand spit and dune system that separates Castlemaine Harbor from the Atlantic Ocean. There'll be time to walk its stunning sands before returning to Dingle Town, where you can relax at your charming hotel. Dinner is on your own.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 6

Visit Slea Head and the Blasket Interpretive Center. Walk the Wild Atlantic Way to Ballydavid Pier

Clogher Beach Cliff Top Walk; 2 miles, easy. Ballydavid Coastline Walk; options from 2 miles, easy

This morning you set out toward Slea Head, where small farms cling to the precipitous slopes along the magnificent Dingle Way. Your morning coastal walk between emerald-green farmland and deep-blue ocean reveals Iron Age remains, such as beehive huts used by Eremite monks and farmers. Rounding the head, you take in breathtaking views of the Blasket Islands spreading out before you. These were once the westernmost inhabited lands of Europe; a population decline to just 22 in 1953—and their lack of access to emergency services—drove residents to the mainland. You continue along grassy paths through pastures dotted with sheep and an occasional donkey, tracing stone walls, crossing stiles, and climbing hills that always reward your efforts with sweeping views of the Irish countryside.

After, learn the story of traditional island life at The Blasket Center, a fascinating cultural center and museum which chronicles the island residents' struggle for existence through exhibitions, interactive displays, artifacts, and audio-visual presentations. During your stay, enjoy an included lunch at the center's Bialann Café, where large floor-to-ceiling windows offer spectacular views of the sea and islands.

After lunch, travel north and trace the Wild Atlantic Way shoreline trail. Your walk along more spectacular coastline delivers you to Ballydavid where you may explore the pier and enjoy a pint overlooking Smerwick Harbor. Returning to Dingle, you stop to visit the medieval-era remains of Kilmalkedar, a National Monument of Ireland. The remarkable site preserves an unusually dense early Christian settlement that contributed to the evolution of the early Irish Church from the 6th to the 12th centuries.

This evening is again yours to explore the imaginative and charming town of Dingle, where strains of traditional pub music pour into the streets at night. Alternatively, stay put and enjoy the many amenities of your hotel, including the award-winning leisure club, pool, and spa. This evening, savor a sumptuous final dinner at your hotel's acclaimed Coastguard Restaurant overlooking Dingle Harbor and the mountains of the Iveragh Peninsula.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 7

Your Ireland: Cork, Killarney & Dingle tour concludes

Your tour finishes at the hotel after breakfast. Please note: The hotel will help you book a taxi, at your own expense, to either Killarney railway station (travel time 60 minutes), Cork Airport (travel time 2.25 hours), or Shannon Airport (travel time 2.5 hours). You are also welcome to join the motorcoach to Kinsale if you wish, departing at 8:45 a.m. The drive takes approximately 2.5 hours.

Included Meals: Breakfast

What's Included

Tour Only

Exceptional boutique accommodations	✓
14 on-tour meals: 7 breakfasts, 4 lunches, and 3 dinners	✓
Local guides with you throughout tour	✓
Local wine and/or beer with dinner	✓
Entrance fees and special events as noted in the itinerary	✓
Telescopic walking sticks provided on tour	✓