

## ***Beara Peninsula Self-Guiding Holiday 8-Day Programme***



Beara is one of the four long fingers of land jutting out into the Atlantic from the South-West of Ireland. The peninsula is a haven of tranquillity, far away from 'coach-tour' country and therefore has long been popular with the more discerning traveller.

Beara's breathtaking panoramas are dominated by mountains and sea. The Caha Mountains and Slieve Miskish Mountains form the spine of the peninsula, which is washed by Kenmare Bay to the north and Bantry Bay to the south. The folding of the rock strata throughout millennia has left the swirling wave-like patterns across the mountains, which are so characteristic of the Beara landscape. Few roads cross this massive natural barrier, and those which do are spectacular feats of engineering: the 'Tunnels Road' via Turner's Rock and the Healy Pass road with its series of hairpin bends, as dramatic as any alpine pass.

All of Beara's towns and villages are dotted along the coastal road which loops around the peninsula. The largest is Castletownbere (or Castletown Bearhaven), a major fishing port located on one of the deepest natural harbours in Ireland. Picturesque villages such as Eyeries and Allihies are renowned for their rows of brightly contrasting houses featuring every shade of the rainbow, where every house competes with its neighbours to be the most colourful.

At the head of Bantry Bay is the village of Glengarriff, from where you can take a short boat trip to Garinish Island, famous for its Italian Gardens with their sub-tropical flora. At the tip of the peninsula is Dursey Island, connected to the mainland by Ireland's only cable car – capacity: 6 people or 1 cow.

Beara is rich in history, pre-history, folklore and archaeology. Copper and other metals have been mined around Allihies since the Bronze Age. The earliest inhabitants made their mark, leaving numerous tombs, standing stones and stone circles dotted across the landscape. The region is rich in mythology: it was the home of the Hag of Beara, a powerful sovereignty goddess whose reputation extends across the whole country.

The Bull Rock, lying off Dursey Island, is reputed to be the site of Teach Doinn ('the house of Donn', Irish god of the underworld) and it is here that souls wait to enter his domain. Near Allihies is the spot where the Children of Lír (who had been turned into swans and banished by their evil stepmother) came ashore after spending 300 years adrift on the Atlantic. Stepping onto terra firma, they became human once again, but aged immediately. They died soon after, but not before being converted to the new religion of Christianity, which had arrived in Ireland since the time of their enchantment. Beara is an ancient, magical region where the power of the past is ever-present.

## **Trip Outline**

This independent walking tour of the Beara Peninsula is largely based on the Beara Way, a waymarked trail which loops around the coast, with occasional forays into the mountainous interior of the peninsula. Starting on the south coast of Beara, the village of Glengarriff at the head of Bantry Bay is your base for the first two nights. For the next two nights your accommodation is in the fishing port of Castletownbere, from where you can also explore Bear Island. You then cross over to the north coast of the peninsula, spending one night each in the secluded villages of Eyeries and Lauragh. Your final night's accommodation is in the heritage town of Kenmare.

**Day 1:** Arrive in Glengarriff - a delightful little town, well known for Garinish Island with its sub-tropical Italian gardens. The influence of the warm Gulf Stream makes it a great place to visit all year round. Proceed to your first accommodation just outside Glengarriff town, where your hostess will give you your full detailed information pack. She will also be able to recommend some of the excellent local restaurants.

Access for this holiday is by bus connection from Cork to Glengarriff which runs all year round.

**Day 2:** Start walking from Glengarriff along the Beara Way, under the Sugarloaf and Glenlough Mountains to finish in the village of Adrigole. This walk gives glorious views over Bantry Bay and across to Sheeps Head and your route joins some tiny old roads as you near Adrigole. Here you have the opportunity to detour a little to see excellent examples of standing stones and megalithic tombs. Telephone from Adrigole and return to Glengarriff for second night.

Walk Details: Distance: 18kms. Duration: 5 hours. Max. Height: 300m. Some road walking, muddy and rocky grass tracks, can be wet underfoot. Boots essential.

**Day 3:** You will be driven back to Adrigole to start your walk, continuing under the dominating mass of Hungry Hill and Maulin Mountain, before reaching the fishing port of Castletownbere. This is a long and very varied walk giving beautiful views over to Bear Island - where you walk tomorrow. Overnight in Castletownbere.

Walk Details: Distance: 25kms. Duration: 6 hours. Max. Height: 400m. Rocky walking with no clear path a lot of the way. Can be very wet underfoot. Some road walking. Boots essential.

**Day 4:** Take the ferry from Castletownbere over to Bear Island - this fascinating place, steeped in history. Loop around the west end of the island, and on to the little village of Rerrin. From here you can continue to the eastern tip of the island, exploring the old army fortifications, before returning by road to the harbour for the return ferry. (As this piece of water is naturally sheltered by the island - the ferry service runs every day). Overnight in Castletownbere.

Walk Details: Distance: 23kms. Duration: 6 hours. Max. Height: 300m. Grass and muddy tracks, rocky in places. Some road walking - boots essential.

**Day 5:** Walk from Castletownbere into the Slieve Miskish Mountains, crossing from the south coast of the peninsula to the north. Continuing up to Teernahillane you leave the Beara Way for a short distance as you cut across the centre of the peninsula, re-joining the route, and continuing around the coast to finish in the picturesque village of Eyeries. Overnight in Eyeries.

Walk Details: Distance: 16kms. Duration: 4.5 hours. Max. Height: 250m. Muddy and grassy tracks, some road walking, can be wet underfoot - boots essential.

**Day 6:** From Eyeries you will be driven to the village of Ardgroom, to start your walk from here. You will have the opportunity to visit some of the famous stone circles in this area along today's route. Leaving Ardgroom, you follow a wonderful old mountain path which leads to the little village of Lauragh at the base of the famous Healy Pass. Overnight near Lauragh.

Walk Details: Distance: 22kms. Duration: 5.5 hours. Max. Height: 200m. Grass tracks - rocky in places. Can be wet underfoot - boots essential. Some road walking at start and finish.

**Day 7:** From Lauragh you will be dropped at Drombohilly to start your final day's walking. From Drombohilly you start walking over the first of two mountain saddles you will be crossing today, with views behind to the Cahal Mountains and north towards the Ring of Kerry. Descending to the Cloonee Lakes, you continue along the shores of Lough Inchiquin before ascending again over the second saddle. Descending into the lovely Dromoghty valley, you walk along narrow little back roads, finally joining the main road for the last about 2kms to walk into the heritage town of Kenmare. Overnight in Kenmare.

Walk Details: Distance: 26kms. Duration: 6 hours. Max. Height: 400m. Open mountain and moorland, grass and mud tracks - boots essential. Some road walking at end of day - please take care.

**Day 8:** From Kenmare, you can make your way back to Glengarriff by taxi. (There is a summer service offered by the local bus to Glengarriff - but this is very irregular so ask locally for details). From Glengarriff you can return by bus to Cork city and by bus from there to the airport. Alternatively, you can make your way from Kenmare to Killarney by bus, and from Killarney a bus or train to Cork, Limerick, Shannon or Dublin.

### ***Beara Peninsula Self-Guiding Holiday 11 Day Programme***



### ***Trip Outline***

This independent walking tour of the Beara Peninsula is largely based on the Beara Way, a waymarked trail which loops around the coast, with occasional forays into the mountainous interior of the peninsula. Starting on the south coast of Beara, the village of Glengarriff at the head of Bantry Bay is your base for the first two nights. For the next two nights your accommodation is in the fishing port of Castletownbere, from where you can also explore Bear Island.

You then cross over to the north coast of the peninsula, spending one night in the picturesque village of Allihies. Before continuing around the coast, you will visit Dursey Sound at the tip of the peninsula. The following day you explore the desolate beauty of Dursey Island, returning to the mainland and walking back to Allihies for your overnight stay. You then head east along Kenmare Bay, spending one night each in the secluded villages of Eyeries and Lauragh. Your final night's accommodation is in the heritage town of Kenmare.

**Day 1-4 :** as in the 8-day tour

**Day 5:** Walk from Castletownbere in a westerly direction towards the tip of the peninsula, passing under Knockgour Mountain to finish in the beautiful little village of Allihies. You will encounter a wealth of archaeological sites along the way. Overnight in Allihies.

Walk Details: Distance: 15kms. Duration: 4 hours. Max. Height: 260m. Muddy and grassy tracks, some road walking, can be wet underfoot - boots essential.

**Day 6:** Continue from Allihies all the way to the tip of the peninsula - arriving at the impressive Dursey Sound - which feels like you have arrived at the end of the world! An optional extra walk takes you to the tip of Crow Head with glorious views across Bantry Bay and West Cork. Overnight at Dursey Sound.

Walk Details: Distance: 14kms. Duration: 4 hours. Max. Height: 200m. Muddy and grassy tracks, some road walking, open mountains with no tracks, can be wet underfoot - boots essential.

**Day 7:** No trip to Beara would be complete without first enjoying a trip in Ireland's only cable car to the beautiful Dursey Island. Walk the full length of this glorious island, going out over the spine of the island and returning along the lower road by the houses. You return to the mainland and walk back to Allihies for your overnight.

Walk Details: Distance: 25kms. Duration: 6 hours. Max. Height: 200m. Muddy and grassy tracks, some road walking, open mountains with no tracks, can be wet underfoot - boots essential.

**Day 8:** This time your journey takes you east from Allihies as you walk through the old copper mines and along the northern slopes of the Slieve Miskish Mountains before finishing in the colourful village of Eyerias. Enjoy a lovely coastal walk before returning to the village for your overnight stop.

Walk Details: Distance: 21kms. Duration: 6 hours. Max. Height: 200m. Muddy and grassy tracks, some road walking and rocky terrain, can be wet underfoot - boots essential.

**Day 9:** From Eyerias you will be driven to the village of Ardgroom, to start your walk from here. You will have the opportunity to visit some of the famous stone circles in this area along today's route. Leaving Ardgroom, you follow a wonderful old mountain path which leads to the little village of Lauragh at the base of the famous Healy Pass. Overnight near Lauragh.

Walk Details: Distance: 22kms. Duration: 5.5 hours. Max. Height: 200m. Grass tracks - rocky in places. Can be wet underfoot - boots essential. Some road walking at start and finish.

**Day 10:** From Lauragh you will be dropped at Drombohill to start your final day's walking. From Drombohill you start walking over the first of two mountain saddles you will be crossing today, with views behind to the Cahal Mountains and north towards the Ring of Kerry. Descending to the Cloonee Lakes, you continue along the shores of Lough Inchiquin before ascending again over the second saddle. Descending into the lovely Dromoghty valley, you walk along small little back roads, finally joining the main road for the last about 2kms to walk into the heritage town of Kenmare. Overnight in Kenmare.

Walk Details: Distance: 26kms. Duration: 6 hours. Max. Height: 400m. Open mountain and bog land, grass and mud tracks - boots essential. Some road walking at end of day - please take care.

**Day 11:** From Kenmare, you can enjoy an extra walk back to Glengarriff or make your way there by taxi. (There is a summer bus service offered to Glengarriff - but this is very irregular so ask locally for details). From Glengarriff you can return by bus to Cork city and by bus from there to the airport. Alternatively, you can make your way from Kenmare to Killarney by bus, and from Killarney a bus or train to Cork, Limerick, Shannon or Dublin.

## **OPTIONS**

Should you wish to extend your holiday - we recommend the following extra days which are suitable for rest days or to add a little more walking to your holiday: -

Day 1: Stay an extra day in Glengarriff to enjoy some of the local walks in the area - or to take a boat trip over to the famous Italian Gardens on Garinish Island.

Day 5: Walk from Castletownbere in a westerly direction, under Knockgour Mountain to finish in the little village of Allihies.

Day 6: Walk from Allihies to the tip of the peninsula and take a trip out to the wild and unspoilt Dursey Island. Return to Allihies for overnight.

Day 7: From Allihies, continue your walk eastwards through the area of the old Copper Mines and continue along the northern side of Knockgour Mountain to finish your day in Eyeries. Your holiday programme continues as above on Day 6 from here. Please be aware that there is no public transport in this area, so transport will be private or by taxi.

Make enquiries when booking and we can organise the extra reservations and transport necessary to do these options.

We reserve the right to alter this itinerary due to weather conditions, the conditions of the walks, or the ability of clients. The above Walk Details are given as a guideline - these may not be accurate on the day due to weather or individual walking pace.

Please note that Ireland can be a wet country both underfoot and overhead. Irish weather is unpredictable, that's one of the "joys" of walking in Ireland, and the nature of walks can change quickly and dramatically because of the weather. For all self-guided holidays you must be able to map read and navigate with a compass. There is some roadwalking on self-guided holidays.

Some parts of the walks in Ireland are very remote in places. This is especially true of the Beara Peninsula. Very often there are no opportunities to purchase a mid-day lunch – a packed lunch is required in such locations.

***On our Self-guided programmes we offer....***

- 7 or 10 nights Bed and Breakfast. Full Irish Breakfast. Private bathrooms
- 6 or 9 days walking. Varied and interesting each day.
- Move your luggage each walking day.
- Give you full walking details and maps of the area.
- Full walking descriptions of each walking day.
- 24 hrs Emergency/Information contact number.
- Airport transfers arranged/booked if required.
- Public transport details, [www.buseireann.ie](http://www.buseireann.ie) [www.irishrail.ie](http://www.irishrail.ie).
- Weather Details, [www.met.ie](http://www.met.ie)
- Full pre-departure information pack to allow you to fully plan for your holiday and so get the most from this Irish walking experience.
- Extra days/nights booking with Travel/Tourism advice service.
- A "mighty" holiday guaranteed.