Ring of Kerry Guided Holiday

Ireland's fabled County Kerry consists of a series of spectacular mountainous peninsulas divided by deep-sea inlets. MacGillycuddy's Reeks form the centrepiece of the Ring of Kerry, a 179-kilometre circuit from Killarney, via Killorglin, Cahersiveen, Waterville, Kenmare and back to Killarney across Moll's Gap and past Ladies View – one of Ireland's most famous viewpoints. Weaving between these points are a network of ancient paths that are nearly as old as the land itself, many of which form part of a long-distance track known as the 'Kerry Way'.

The name 'Kerry' comes from the Old Irish word Ciarraige meaning the people of Ciar, an early Celtic tribe that settled in the area around 300 BC. In fact, Kerry has an outstanding collection of historical and archaeological sites that date back over 7,000 years, with several ancient forts and numerous early Christian churches. Impossibly green pastures stretch as far as the eye can see, completely empty save for small herds of sheep or goats, and at almost every turn there are spectacular views of mist-covered mountains and wild stretches of uninhabitable coastline where deep fissures have been carved, over the eons, by the pounding waves of the Atlantic Ocean.

Here and there along the coast, pretty fishing villages, such as Caherdaniel and Portmagee, have successfully withstood the elements and offer a picturesque contrast to the verdant hills that surround them. The Skellig Islands lie 8 miles off the tip of the peninsula, two rocky peaks rising sheer out of the Atlantic Ocean. Skellig Michael is a world heritage site on account of its 6th century monastic site, with beehive huts, oratories and inscribed crosses. Little Skellig is home to over 40,000 gannets, the second largest colony in the world. This is a delightful one-week walk and along the way you'll enjoy plenty of good Irish cheer!

Trip Outline

This trip takes us on a circular route from Killarney, unveiling some of the most beautiful scenery in the region, exploring both the southern and northern coastlines of the Iveragh peninsula. After spending two nights at Killarney, we move onto Derrynane on Kenmare Bay, where we also stay for two nights. Here you will find Derrynane National Park and Derrynane House, the ancestral family home of Daniel O'Connell, 'The Liberator', a 19th century politician.

Moving on we spend the last 3 nights in the market town of Caherciveen, across the water from the famed Valentia Island. On your "free day" you have the opportunity, weather permitting, to take a boat to the Skellig Monastic Rock - an experience of a lifetime and not to be missed. Caherciveen is a market town in transition, being part of the "old Ireland living in the new". Our walks in the area reflect the Peninsula at its best. After our farewell evening and morning breakfast we transfer to Killarney for onward journeys …. And memories to be cherished.

Day 1 Courtesy Airport Collection from Shannon Airport at 12.00 hrs., Cork Airport at 14.00 hrs. or Kerry Airport at 16.00 hrs. Arrive at first guesthouse in Killarney where we stay for the next 2 nights of your holiday. Evening meal together and a general chat about the coming week's walks.

Day 2 Today is a glorious opportunity to see Killarney at its best – its hills and lakes. Starting the walk under Torc Mountain, you follow the Old Kenmare Road on the shores of the upper lake to Galways' Bridge and Lord Brandon's Cottage. This afternoon offers you a spectacular boat ride via the Lakes of Killarney and the Meeting of the Waters, ending at Ross Castle, the 15th century seat of the O'Donoghue Clan. Return to Killarney for dinner and overnight.
Walk Details - Distance: 10kms. Duration: 4 hours walk + 1.5 hrs.(approx.) boat ride. Max. Height: 200m. Rocky and sometimes wet & muddy tracks and road walking. Boots essential.

Day 3 Leaving Killarney, we transfer you to Derrycunnihy Church from where you walk through Derrycunnihy Wood and follow the Old Kenmare Road through hillside and moorland finally descending into the heritage town of Kenmare. Transfer from the end of the walk to the pretty village of Sneem where you stay for the next 2 nights. Evening dinner and overnight.
Walk Details - Distance: 16kms. Duration: 5 hours. Max. Height: 300m. Mountain tracks and open green roads. Can be wet – boots essential.

Day 4 Walk from nearby Sneem to the spectacular Staigue Fort. This is a glorious walk with breath-taking views to the south over Kenmare Bay to the Beara Peninsula and West towards Derrynane. Return to Derrynane for evening meal and overnight.
Walk Details - Distance: 16kms. Duration: 5 hours. Max. Height: 400m. Grass tracks, open bog land and rough mountains. Can be wet underfoot - boots essential. Some road walking.

Day 5 Leaving Derrynane we enjoy a wonderful morning walk around the historic Derrynane National Park and Abbey Island with great coastal vistas. This was once the home of Daniel O'Connell, The Liberator. From here we continue along this majestic coastline with views out to the Skellig Rock, to the lovely village of Waterville. Short transfer this afternoon to Caherciveen for evening meal and overnight accommodation.
Walk Details - Distance: 16kms. Duration: 5 hours. Max. Height: 300m. Some road walking, grass tracks and rough heather. Boots essential.

Day 6 This is your 'free day' to allow you to partake in other activities if you wish – such as cycling, horseriding, canoeing or just laze around with a book! We may arrange a visit to the famous and spectacular monastic island of Skellig Michael, 12 kms. off the coast, if weather, sea and boats permit! A walk on Valentia Island is another excellent possibility. Dinner and overnight in Caherciveen.

Day 7 Today, we follow an ancient and fascinating stagecoach trail from Kells, just outside Cahersiveen, and enjoy the most wonderful scenery of the week as we walk along the shores on Dingle Bay east towards Glenbeigh. A truly memorable walk for our last day on the Ivreagh Peninsula. Transfer back to Caherciveen. Overnight and farewell dinner in Caherciveen.
Walk Details - Distance: 18kms. Duration: 5hours. Max. Height: 450m. Grass and rocky tracks, open bog land and some road walking. Boots essential.

Day 8 Departures. After breakfast, we offer a courtesy transfer to Killarney Bus/Rail Station arriving there at approx 09.45/10.00 hrs. From there you will find bus connections to Shannon Airport - 3 hrs. approx and Cork Airport – 2 hrs. approx.

Holiday Includes:

- 7 nights bed in room with private shower/ bathroom.
- Full Irish breakfast each morning
- Picnic lunch (on walking days only), 7 evening dinners, 6 days walking with expert Irish guide who accompanies the group for the duration of the holiday
- Transport to/from each day's walking locations and luggage transfers when required. Courtesy airport transfer from airport to the start of the holiday and first night's B+B. (As per our transfer timetable)

- Transfers to nearest bus/train station at end of holiday (also within our timetable). Public Bus Service may be used

Not Included: Any boat trips (eg. Skellig Michael), personal drinks, entrance fees to theatres, parks or museums etc. medical expenses or gratuities.

Courtesy Airport Collection: Saturdays only
Shannon at 12 noon / Cork at 14.00 hrs. / Kerry at 16.00 hrs.

If you do not wish to avail of the Courtesy Airport Collection, please make your own way to the first accommodation, where your guide will meet you at 18.00 hrs. for a Briefing Session followed by dinner with the group at 19.00 hrs. www.irishrail.ie www.buseireann.ie

Please note that Ireland can be a bit 'damp' both underfoot and overhead, with some liquid sunshine! Irish weather is unpredictable and the nature of walks can change quickly and dramatically because of the weather. This is one of the many pleasant aspects of walking in Ireland. We reserve the right to alter this itinerary due to weather conditions or the walking ability of each group.

2012 Tour Dates:
April 14 - 21
April 28 - May 5
May 26 - June 2
June 16 - 23
July 14 - 21
August 18 - 25
September 15 - 22
October 6 - 13

Difficulty of Walks: 2 Boot