



# Dingle Peninsula

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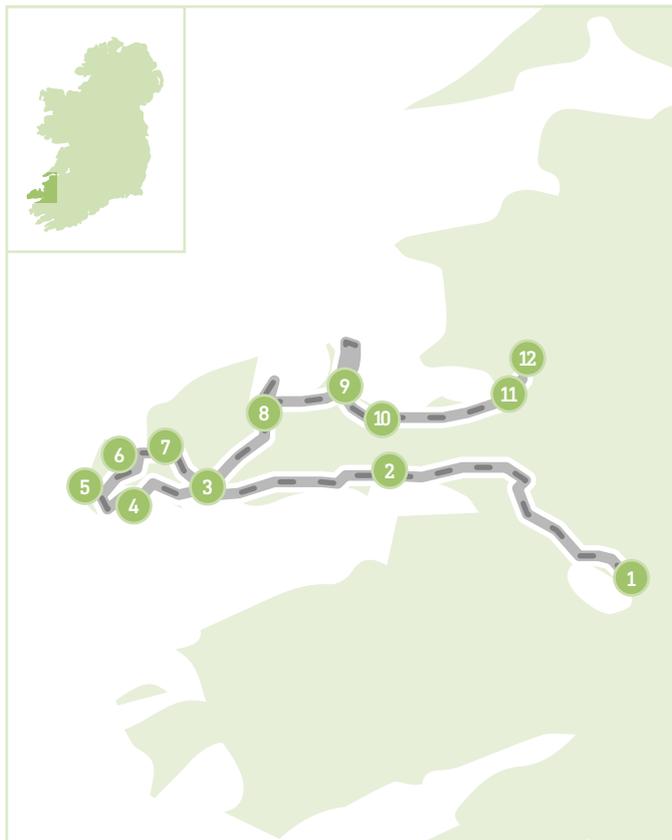


 Dingle Peninsula, County Kerry

# Dingle Peninsula

The coast is the star of this show. You'll find it's where the promontory meets the ocean – at whitewater-pounded rocks, secluded coves and wide, gold-sand beaches – that Dingle's beauty is at its most unforgettable.

- 1 Killarney**  
Gateway to the Ring of Kerry, a highlight of many a visit to Ireland.
- 2 Inch**  
Cinematic surroundings, surf and Stone Age settlements.
- 3 Dingle Town**  
Quaint village sprinkled with studios, galleries and wonderful music-filled pubs.
- 4 Sleah Head**  
Beehive huts, forts, inscribed stones and church sites.
- 5 Dunquin**  
Hub for the Blasket Islands.
- 6 Ballyferriter**  
Tiny Gaeltacht (Irish-speaking) village.
- 7 Gallarus Castle & Gallarus Oratory**  
Two exceptional centuries-old edifices.
- 8 Cloghane**  
Quiet village at the foot of Mt Brandon.
- 9 Castlegregory**  
The peninsula's water-sports playground.
- 10 Glanteenassig Forest Recreation Area**  
Oasis of woodlands, mountains and lakes.
- 11 Blennerville**  
The region's largest working 19th-century flour windmill.
- 12 Tralee**  
Busy market town and home to the annual International Rose of Tralee Festival.



## Trip at a Glance

 Duration

**3–4 Days**

185km/115 miles

 Best Time to Go

**Jun–Aug**

For the warmer months, Dingle town has races and a regatta in August.

 Essential Photo

**Connor Pass**

Snap a perfect peninsula panorama from the Connor Pass summit.

 Best for Culture

**Slea Head**

Slea Head's astonishing concentration of ancient sites.



 Muckross House and Gardens, Killarney National Park

## 1 Killarney

The lively tourist town of Killarney is an ideal place to kick off your trip. You'll find a plethora of places to eat, drink and, when you need a break, sleep. If you have time, the 10,236-hectare Killarney National Park, immediately to its south, and the Gap of Dunloe, with its rocky terrain, babbling brooks and alpine lakes, are well worth exploring.

### Trip Highlight

## 2 Inch

Inch's 5km-long sand spit was a location for both *Ryan's Daughter* and *Playboy of the Western World*. Sarah Miles, love interest in the former film, described her stay here as 'brief but bonny'. The dunes are certainly bonny, scattered with the remains of shipwrecks and Stone and Iron Age settlements. The west-facing beach is also a hot surfing spot; waves average 1m to 3m.

### Trip Highlight

## 3 Dingle Town

Framed by its fishing port, the peninsula's charming little 'capital' is quaint without even trying. Dingle is one of Ireland's largest Gaeltacht (Irish-speaking) towns (although locals have voted to retain the name Dingle rather than go by the officially sanctioned – and dictated – An Daingean). This is one of those towns whose very

## The Scenic Route: Connor Pass

At 456m the Connor Pass is Ireland's highest mountain pass. On a foggy day you'll see nothing but the road just in front of you, but in fine weather it offers phenomenal views of Dingle Harbour to the south and Mt Brandon to the north. The road is in good shape, despite being very narrow and very steep. The summit car park yields views down to two lakes in the rock-strewn valley below, plus the remains of walls and huts where people once lived incredibly hard lives. When visibility is good, the 10-minute climb to the summit is well worthwhile for the kind of vistas that inspire mountain climbers.





Dingle Town, County Kerry

fabric is its attraction. Wander the higgledy-piggledy streets and shop for handcrafted jewellery, arts, crafts and artisan food. Don't leave Dingle without catching traditional live music at pubs such as An Droichead Beag (Small Bridge Pub) and dining on standout seafood at its restaurants.

**Trip Highlight**

**4 Sleá Head**

Overlooking the mouth of Dingle Bay, Mt Eagle and the Blasket Islands, Sleá Head has fine beaches and superbly preserved structures from Dingle's ancient past, including beehive huts, forts, inscribed stones and church sites.

The Celtic & Prehistoric Museum, 3km west of the village of Ventry (Ceann Trá), squeezes in an incredible collection of Celtic and prehistoric artefacts. About 4km further west, the Iron Age Dunbeg Fort is a dramatic example of a promontory fortification, perched atop a sheer sea cliff. Inside the fort's outer stone walls are the remains of a house and a beehive hut, as well as an underground passage.

**5 Dunquin**

The Blasket Islands lie 5km out into the Atlantic from the diminutive village of Dunquin (Dún Chaoin). Its standout attraction is the Blas-

ket Centre (Ionad an Bhlascaoid Mhóir), a wonderful interpretive centre with a wall-to-ceiling window overlooking the islands. If you want to sail out to them, Blasket Islands Eco Marine Tours ([www.marinetours.ie](http://www.marinetours.ie)) departs from Ventry Harbour.

**6 Ballyferriter**

Housed in the 19th-century schoolhouse in the tiny village of Ballyferriter (Baile an Fheirtearaigh), the Músaem Chorca Dhuibhne (Dingle Peninsula Museum) has displays on the peninsula's archaeology and ecology. Across the street there's a lonely, lichen-covered church.

The remains of the 5th- or 6th-century Riasc Monastic Settlement are an impressive, haunting sight, particularly the pillar with beautiful Celtic designs. Excavations have also revealed the foundations of an oratory first built with wood and later stone, a kiln for drying corn and a cemetery.

#### Trip Highlight

### 7 Gallarus Castle & Gallarus Oratory

None of its battlements remain but you can now access the superbly restored interior of Gallarus Castle, built by the FitzGerald's around the 15th century. A few hundred metres to the southeast, the dry-stone Gallarus Oratory is quite a sight, standing in its lonely spot beneath the brown hills as it has done for some 1200 years. It has withstood the elements perfectly, apart from a slight sagging in the roof. Shaped like an upturned boat, it has a doorway on the western side and a round-headed window on the east. Inside the doorway are two projecting stones with holes that once supported the door.

### 8 Cloghane

Cloghane (An Clochán) is another little piece of peninsula beauty. The village's friendly pubs nestle between Mt Brandon and Brandon Bay, with views across the water to the Stradbally Mountains. For

many, the main goal is scaling 951m-high Mt Brandon, Ireland's eighth-highest peak. If that sounds too energetic, there are also plenty of coastal strolls. The 5km drive from Cloghane out to Brandon Point follows ever-narrower single-track roads wandered by sheep, culminating in cliffs with fantastic views north and east.

### 9 Castlegregory

A highlight of the quiet village of Castlegregory (Caislean an Ghriare) is the vista back to the often snowy hills to the south. However, things change when you drive up the sandstrewn road along the Rough Point peninsula, the broad spit of land between Tralee Bay and Brandon Bay. Great underwater visibility makes this one of Ireland's best diving areas, where you can glimpse pilot whales, orcas, sunfish and dolphins.

#### Trip Highlight

### 10 Glanteenassig Forest Recreation Area

Encompassing 450 hectares of woodland, mountain, lake and bog, Glanteenassig Forest Recreation Area is a magical, little-visited treasure. There are two lakes; you can drive right up to the higher lake, which is encircled by a plank boardwalk, though it's too narrow for wheelchairs or prams. Make sure you're out before closing, or

you'll have to pay a call-out fee to have the gates unlocked.

### 11 Blennerville

Blennerville used to be Tralee's chief port, though the harbour has long since silted in. A 19th-century flour windmill here has been restored and is the largest working mill in Ireland and Britain. Its modern visitor centre houses an exhibition on grain milling, and on the thousands of emigrants who boarded 'coffin ships' from what was then Kerry's largest embarkation point. Admission includes a 30-minute guided windmill tour.

### 12 Tralee

Elegant Denny St and Day Pl, lined with 18th-century buildings, are the oldest parts of Kerry's down-to-earth county town. South of the Mall, the Square is an open contemporary space. An absolute treat is the Kerry County Museum, which presents excellent interpretive displays on Irish historical events and trends. Nearby on Princes St, Tralee's farmers market takes place on Saturdays. Don't miss a wildlife-spotting cruise at the recently opened Tralee Bay Wetlands Centre.

## Link Your Trip: Ring of Kerry

Ireland's most famous driving loop circumnavigates the Iveragh Peninsula and combines jaw-dropping cliffs and crashing seas with soaring mountains. You can drive the Ring of Kerry in a day, but the longer you spend, the more you'll enjoy it. From Killarney, head west to Killorglin and make the loop before embarking on your drive around Dingle.





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