

Dingle

The Dingle Peninsula - Corca Dhuibhne

The Irish-speaking Dingle Peninsula or Corca Dhuibhne in Irish, literally lies at the end of Europe, as Ireland's most westerly point. Peace and tranquility are synonymous with the Dingle Peninsula. Life moves at an unhurried pace, but the local people are quick to offer you the opportunity to share their unique culture and heritage.

Descending from the incredible Conor Pass, Ireland's highest mountain pass, you'll arrive at the bustling cosmopolitan town of Dingle, the peninsula's main hub. This colourful fishing town, set around a busy fishing port and marina, is packed with eclectic eateries and traditional pubs where you're bound to catch a lively traditional music session. Gaily painted houses and busy streets lead you to the harbour, where you can meet Fungi, a playful bottle-nosed dolphin who cavorts for the enjoyment of everyone. Children will love taking boat trips to visit Fungi or a visit to the town's well-stocked aquarium.

The land west of An Daingean (Dingle) is a Gaeltacht, or Irish speaking area, where the traditional language, folk customs, crafts and lore are very much alive today. The Blaskets are the most westerly islands in Europe located off the coast. Ionad an Bhlascoid Mhóir – The wonderful heritage centre at Dún Chaoin celebrates the lives of the Islanders and the Irish language and culture.

The Dingle Peninsula has the greatest concentration of archaeological sites in Ireland. Step back in time as you visit such treasures as the Kilmalkedar Church, The Dún an Óir Fort or Fort of Gold, and the Gallarus Oratory. With over 5,000 years of history, mystery and legend swirling about the Dingle Peninsula, you'll never be left wondering what to do. Shop for exquisite Celtic jewellery and unique crafts, stroll the lovely beach at Inch, enjoy a few pints while listening to a traditional music session, and take tranquility to a whole new level.





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FUNGIE THE DOLPHIN

Dingle towns and villages

Annascaul is the birthplace of Jerome Connor, the famous sculptor and Tom Crean, the Antarctic explorer. The mountains here will tempt many to make a long stay, and for the walker there is a particularly good route via Annascaul Lake over the hills of the Beenoskee group to Stradbally and Castlegregory.

Ballydavid (Baile na nGall) is a quiet fishing village on the shores of Smerwick Harbour with views of Mount Brandon to the east and the Three Sisters and Dún an Óir to the west. Tradition is strong in this Irish Speaking area. The unique currach used for generations by fishermen on the western seaboard is still built here.

Ballyferriter - Baile an Fheirtéaraigh lies on the extreme west of the peninsula, near Smerwick Harbour and hosts a celebrated Irish Language school during the Summer. Between the village and Cuan Ard na Caithe is Dún an Óir (the Fort of Gold), an Iron Age promontory fort, which was the location of a bloody massacre, the Siege of Smerwick, in 1580.

Brandon On the northern tip of the peninsula set beneath the imposing Mount Brandon, the remote village of Brandon, with its gorgeous views over Brandon Point and Brandon Head, acts as a great base for walkers and naturalists. The area, rich in coastal plant and wildlife, has been awarded a 'beatha', EU environmental quality award for its contribution to sustainable living. An ancient Celtic harvest festival Feile Lughnasa, evoking pagan celebrations of the harvest, which in modern times means storytelling, sand art competitions, treasure hunts and nightly music, is held here the last weekend in July.

Camp The village is dominated by its golden sandy beach on Tralee Bay, at the seaward end of Glen Fas. A stone promontory fort on the mountain slopes at the height of 625m (2,050ft) and is the highest fortification on the western fringe of Europe. Apart from the archaeological interest the fort is well worth a visit for the magnificent, extensive view of the Dingle peninsula.

Castlemaine Caisleán na Mainge - The castle of the River Maine. It is here that the famous Australian outlaw 'The Wild Colonial Boy' was born. Standing just beyond the head of Castlemaine Harbour the village is pleasantly situated against the background of the Slieve Mish mountains to the north-west.



COUMEENOOLE BEACH 81

Castlegregory On the northern stretch of the peninsula in an area called the Maharees, lies the charming village of Castlegregory. Flanked on either side by the large bays, Tralee Bay and Brandon Bay, the area has an abundance of well-serviced beaches to enjoy. Brandon Bay is popular with windsurfers while the Maharees area, with its blue flag beach, is perfect for shore angling. You can swim water-sail or horse-ride on Ireland's longest beach which stretches 12 miles from the Maharees through Castlegregory to Cloghane.

Cloghane - An Clochán The colourful village of Cloghane, just east of Brandon, hosts the Féile Lughnasa festival with Brandon. The village, with its lively pubs and scenic hinterland is also a good starting point for Mount Brandon hikes and there are numerous picturesque walks and cycle routes in the area. The distinctive red sand beach Ballyquin, a great spot for fishing dogfish and bass, is close by.

Dunquin, in the heart of the gaeltacht (Irish-speaking) area, is a traditional village at the foot of Mount Eagle (516m) overlooking the Blasket Sound and the spectacular jagged peaks of the Blasket Islands. The 1970 film *Ryan's Daughter* was shot here and featured the dramatic cliff-flanked Coumeenoolie Beach. Boat trips to the Blaskets are available from Dunquin pier.

Feohanagh Under the shadow of Mount Brandon, Feohanagh and the surrounding countryside is ideal for the hill walker. The coastline in the vicinity is of much geological interest and nearby is Brandon Creek from which St. Brendan is reputed to have set sail on his voyage of discovery and which Tim Severin used as his starting point when he retraced St. Brendan's route in 1976.

Inch (An Inse) lies near the base of the Inch Peninsula. Inch Beach is Blue Flag Status and is backed by sandhills of archaeological interest.

Ventry - Ceann Trá The little village of Ventry, which sits at the centre of Ventry Harbour, lies on the stunning coastal Sleat Head drive. A beautiful sandy horseshoe-bay that stretches 5km provides a safe swimming area that's also popular with windsurfers and horse-riders. There are plenty of local walks that span out from the village including the renowned Dingle Way.

For more information on Dingle's towns and villages, visit our website

www.discoverireland.ie/southwest