

West Cork

West Cork is almost a separate region in its own right. It begins at Kinsale, resort of sailors and gourmet capital of Ireland and runs in a westerly direction to Dursey Head at the tip of the Beara Peninsula.

Both landscape and coastline become more complex and rugged as you proceed westwards, rising towards the crags and moorlands, to the Pass of Keimaneigh and Gougane Barra's silent lake locked in its encircling cliffs.

But it is to the coast that most people become addicted, this is a really good sailing area. It is festooned with little ports, bays, inlets and harbours and boats of every type and design are there, fishing, sailing and cruising.

Take Courtmacsherry and Castletownshend well known as dropping points for pirates and smugglers but now more likely to be anchor points for sailing yachts and explorers of the Irish coastline. Or think of the great fishing fleets that come to deliver their catch to the factory and awaiting trucks in places like Union Hall.

Roaringwater Bay with Carbery's Hundred Isles including The Gaeltacht island of Oiléan Chléire and the islands out to the last landfall and the lighthouse at Mizen Head. Oiléan Chléire is Ireland's southern most inhabited island. It is a rugged place with antiquities ranging from megalithic standing stones to medieval castles, excellent bird-watching and frequent visits by whales, turtles and sharks, While on nearby Sherkin Island can be found the ruins of a 15th century abbey. The nearby Fastnet Rock will be well known to sailors as an important navigational mark.

West Cork is a world apart, an area seemingly remote from the noisy world of commercialisation, yet discreetly offering quiet luxury or simple homeliness, which ever you like to choose.





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West Cork towns and villages

Allihies Allihies was once the base for the thriving copper mines in the area, which reached the peak of production in the last century. Do take special care in the area of the old mine workings as there are many old mine shafts which are dangerous. The attractive village of Allihies looks out on Ballydonegan Bay from which the copper ore was exported by sea.

Baltimore is a very attractive village, harbour and sailing base. The village is 13km south-west of Skibbereen. A ferry service for Sherkin and Cape Clear islands departs from here. In 1631 the town was raided by a band of Algerian pirates. Some of the local inhabitants were killed and many were taken off as slaves to North Africa.

Bantry This is a major town at the head of Bantry Bay and is the principal coastal town in this part of West Cork. It is delightfully situated with a spectacular backdrop of mountains. This is an old town with many historical connections. Chief amongst these is that Bantry was the destination of two French Invasions - 1689 and 1796. At the edge of the town stands the ancient Kilnaruane Stone which dates from early Christian times.

Castletownbere Set in a large and dramatic harbour, Castletownbere is one of the largest white fishing ports in Ireland and is host to many European fleets. This is an excellent centre for the exploration of the south-western end of the Beara Peninsula. Nearby is Bere Island, and a visit to this island makes an interesting day trip.

Clonakilty is a town which has an excellent sense of what is best in terms of environmental presentation. It is noted for the excellence of many of its shop fronts which use traditional materials. The nearby blue flag beach area of Inchydoney is extremely popular with visitors. Michael Collins, one of the great heroes of the 1916-1922 period, was born at Woodfield near here.

Dunmanway This town is located in the centre of West Cork and is a 17th century planned town; the original two triangular squares still survive. Sam Maguire, the man who gave his name to the All Ireland Senior Football trophy was born here.



Durrus The very pleasant village of Durrus is located at the head of Dunmanus Bay on what is called the 'Friendly Cove', on one of the loveliest and most unspoilt coasts in Ireland. From here you have the choice of two intriguing peninsulas to explore.

Glandore Just 6.5km west of Rosscarbery the village of Glandore has a beautiful location overlooking Glandore Harbour. Nearby is the famous Drombeg Stone Circle which has been dated to 150 BC following archaeological excavation in the late 1950's.

Glengarriff This is one of Ireland's most beautifully situated villages and an area which is of special interest to botanists, because of the mild climate which the area enjoys. Glengarriff is one of the few areas in Ireland which still has some of the original oak forest which totally covered the country.

Goleen The village of Goleen is attractively located towards the south-western end of the Mizen Peninsula, in West Cork, and is an attractive base for exploring the beautiful coastline of this part of West Cork.

A visitor centre is located in the Irish Lights signal station at Mizen Head.

Schull This is a delightful seaside market town and a popular visitor base. It is protected from the north by Mount Gabriel, once the site of a prehistoric mining operation. It is a good place to search out your ceramic sculpture or batik wall-hanging. You will be most welcome to visit the Planetarium, where Star Shows are given during the visitor season. This important water sports centre looks out across Schull Harbour to the many islands of Roaringwater Bay. Local ferries operate during the summer giving access to Cape Clear Island, Carbery's Hundred Isles and a closer look at the famous Fastnet Rock.

Skibbereen Skibbereen with a population of approximately 2,000 people is the capital of the Carberies and is a most progressive town. This town was one of many in Ireland which suffered very badly during the period of the Irish Famine in the 1840's. The Famine plot survives today in the Abbey Cemetery west of the town. 5kms south west of Skibbereen lies Lough Hyne, Ireland's first Marine Nature Reserve.

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

www.discoverireland.ie/southwest