

Embrace



ACTIVITIES GUIDE INCLUDING ILLUSTRATED MAP



RAINY DAY

Perhaps you have landed in the heart of Kerry and there's a few tears being shed from above (code for: 'it's raining!'). Well, fear not - there's plenty to do (and you can stay dry too). In Killorglin town there's the magnificent St James' Church. In 2013 the parish celebrated the 125th anniversary of its foundation stone being laid. A tour is a must of this beautiful structure. In Library Place - a new development at the top of the hill in Killorglin town - there is a magnificent permanent exhibition of paintings by the world-famous artist Pauline Bewick, who is also a resident of the area. This is a rural area and generations have lived off the land. We have used peat turf to fuel our homes for centuries. To understand that culture a visit to the traditional bog village museum, adjacent to the Red Fox Inn (halfway between Killorglin and Glenbeigh), is a must. There's no better way to spend a day indoors than at the Tom Crean museum in Annascaul. Our great Antarctic explorer is remembered in his home village in a display housed in the aptly named South Pole Inn. Also in Annascaul there's the Jerome Connor art collection. This is a visual tribute to the works of the great sculptor, responsible for a series of famous works in the US. Included among these works are the Nuns of the Battlefield in Washington DC and a sculpture of Irish patriot Robert Emmet near the White House.

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GOLF

Golf has always been an attraction here. We are lucky to have some of the finest courses in Ireland right on our doorstep. Dooks Golf Club is renowned as being one of the great links courses. It offers a different challenge on its majestic sandy perch overlooking Castlemaine Harbour. It is also one of the country's oldest courses, in 2014 it celebrated its 125th anniversary. There's more - the courses in Beaufort, the Gap of Dunloe and Killorglin are all of the highest quality and offer golfers of any standard an enjoyable, yet challenging, experience.

WATER ACTIVITIES

Our natural resources are treasured but we like to show them off too! Caragh Lake is the jewel. The lake naturally splits into Upper and Lower levels. The best way to fully appreciate its magnificence is by hiring a boat for a few hours. Afloat on this lake is as close as you'll get to Nirvana - it just has to be experienced. Ask for boat hire information at the tourist office in Killorglin town. Fancy a spot of fishing? No problem. Deep sea fishing tours are available with departures from Rossbeigh and Cromane. Check with the tourist offices for more information or on gokerry.ie. Angling fans are spoiled for choice here. There are so many good spots to choose from. Don't miss out, base yourself here and sample them all. Don't think about what might have been. Some of the potential catches in our rivers and lakes include salmon, sea trout & brown trout. We make full use of our natural resources, and so should you.



Angling fans are spoiled for choice

CYCLING

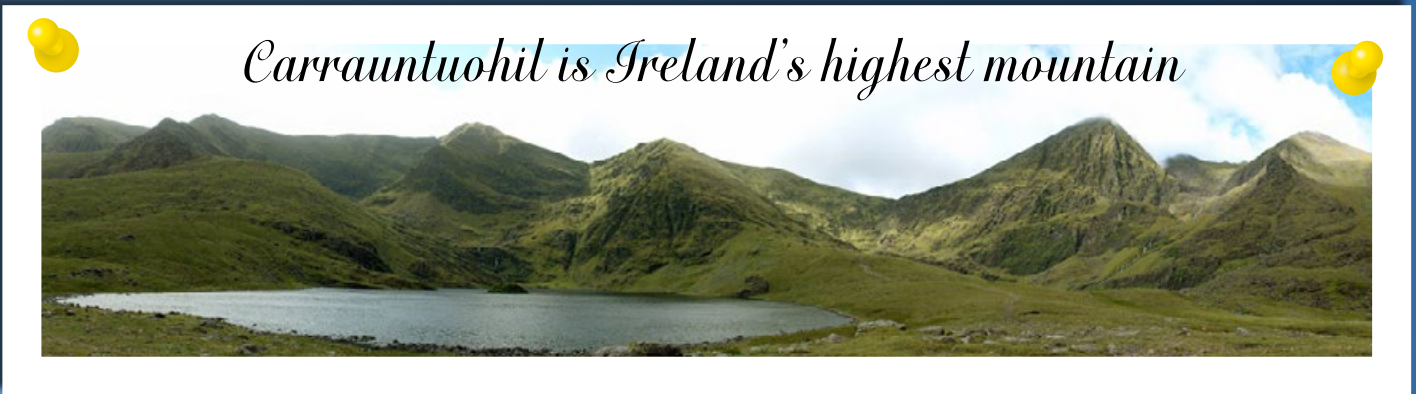
Bike? Check. Camera? Check. Prepared to be amazed? You'd better be. This is the perfect place to enjoy a cycling trip. There's a vast maze of roads that will take you into a world of scenery that needs to be seen to be believed. The terrain is undulating but not daunting, it's a rollercoaster ride and most routes are accessible to all fitness levels. By the way, you will spend more time off the bike. There's just too much to photograph around here. From the Gap of Dunloe, through Glencar and on to Glenbeigh there are narrow roads that take you on a wondrous spin. Cycling the Ring of Kerry from Beaufort to Killorglin brings you along the stretch of road that for one day every year thousands of cyclists aim to conquer in the name of charity. In 2014 some 10,000 cyclists took part in the Ring of Kerry Charity Cycle. It is a unique event. Bike hire and repair services are available in Killorglin and Glenbeigh. We love our cycling here. The sport has developed a great tradition in the area. Two Killorglin natives have won the Rás: one of the greatest European amateur cycle races. Gene Mangan won in 1955 while his neighbour John Mangan was triumphant in 1972. Of course, they had the best of training routes - why don't you give it a go! For more detailed routes log on to gokerry.ie. There is also information on cycling packages, off-road possibilities and guided tours.

HILL WALKING/LOWER LEVEL

We understand that some treks can be quite strenuous. Luckily there's an array of gentle walkways to suit pretty much anyone. There are hill walks, looped walks, and beach walks as well as a host of river, forest, and heritage trails. The famous Kerry Way (a circular route through the Iveragh Peninsula and into Killarney) passes through the Black Valley, Glencar & Glenbeigh. At over 200km it is one of Ireland's longest signposted walking routes. The trail follows small roads commonly known to the Irish as 'boreens', long-abandoned coach roads and mass paths that are now overgrown with grass but firm underfoot. There are also sections that cross through forestry, national parks and farmland. In Annascaul/Inch there is also access to The Dingle Way. Most of the route crosses low-lying land and looks up at Sliabh Mish and Brandon mountains rather than down from them. Another plus is that both The Kerry Way and The Dingle Way are largely free of traffic, apart from the odd curious sheep that is. A few kilometres on the Dingle side of Castlemaine is the village of Boolteens, known for its 'Uphill, Downhill' looped walk. Our lakes - such as Coomasaham in Glenbeigh and Caragh Lake - also provide superb settings for a stroll. In Killorglin town try a walk along the banks of the River Laune. This majestic waterway flows from Lough Leane in Killarney through Mid Kerry and into the Atlantic Ocean at Castlemaine Harbour. Not to be missed is the beautiful walk through Tomies Wood in Beaufort, incorporating spectacular views of lakes & waterfall, occasional glimpses of native red deer and Ireland's largest bird of prey, the sea eagle.



A Walkers paradise



MID KERRY FESTIVALS

- Annascaul & Inch**
August 1-3: Annascaul Beerfest
- Beaufort & Gap of Dunloe**
July 26: The Ring of the Reeks family cycle event
- Glenbeigh**
August 29-31: Glenbeigh Races (held on Rossbeigh beach)
- Killorglin**
June bank holiday: K-Fest
July 19: Rás na Ríochta adventure race
August 10-12: Puck Fair
September 12-14: Flavour of Killorglin food festival

HERITAGE & CULTURE

There is an indelible link here between the people, the land and our history. The Mid Kerry area is dotted with fascinating buildings that hark back to a tumultuous time. However, one thing that has not changed is our dependence on - and love of - the land we live in. Historical sites are omnipresent. Close to Milltown there's Killagha Abbey (dating back to 1217), White Church (from the 800s, an example of Romanesque architecture), Killodoghane Mass Rock (1600s), and many more places of interest. Head for Ardcanauht, near Castlemaine, to view the Ogham Stones there. There are less than 400 of these ancient stone carvings left in southern Ireland and Wales. There are numerous castle ruins in the area, the most popular being at Glenbeigh (called 'Wynn's Folly'), Ballymalis, and Dunloe. In Killorglin, Ballykissane Pier is the area's link to Ireland's famous 1916 uprising. The pier was the location of the first casualties of this rebellion against British rule. Not a month goes by without a fair. The most famous of all is Puck Fair, held at the same time every year (August 10-12). The fair is now over 400-years old and the goat is still king! There are horse fairs in Milltown, Gap of Dunloe, Killorglin, and Annascaul; there's the Glencar Cattle Show and four traditional 'Pattern' fairs. 'Pattern' is hiberno-English for Patron and the fairs celebrate the patron saints of different areas. Land and lore go hand in hand here.



Old Stone Alignment

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

No matter what the fitness level, there is something for everyone here. Just look around, it's an outdoor playground. You want beaches? You won't find many better in Ireland than Inch, Rossbeigh and Kells. Fancy some kayaking, rock climbing, orienteering or sailing? No problem. There's Cappanalea, an outdoor activities centre, situated on the Killorglin side of the glorious Caragh Lake. The surfing world has recently unraveled a great Irish secret. Experience it for yourself at Inch beach, where surf schools will cater for beginners. There's an abundance of walking and cycling opportunities. The motto is: just hit the road and see where your legs carry you. Fascinating forest walks await at Lickeen in Glencar; Kilderry in Milltown; Tomies in Beaufort, and Rossbeigh. All will enthral. Horseriding you say? Yep, there's Burke's in Rossbeigh, and Ardall, in Castlemaine.

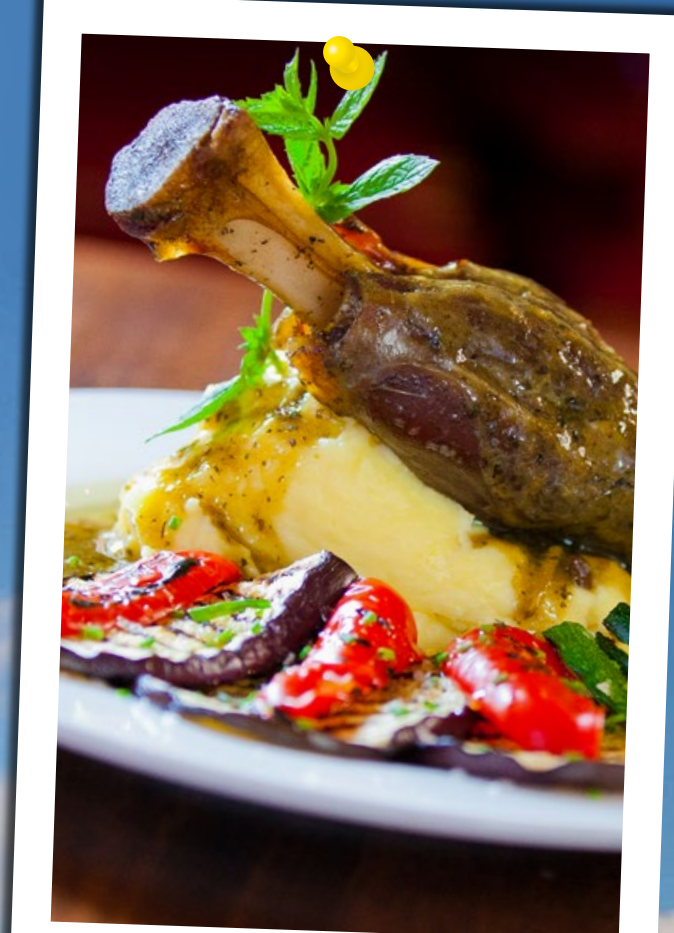


Horseriding on Rossbeigh Beach

If you have younger children and these activities don't suit, try a farm tour or a pony and trap ride. Hazelfort Farm in Ballymalis, five miles outside Killorglin on the main road to Killarney, provides a magnificent insight into farm-life. From here, head to the famous Gap of Dunloe where you can enjoy one of the legendary pony and trap tours in an area of jaw-dropping beauty. There are also a host of playgrounds: in Milltown, Killorglin, Beaufort, Listry, Cromane and Rossbeigh. Plenty to do - have you allowed enough time? Log on to gokerry.ie for more.

FOOD & NIGHTLIFE

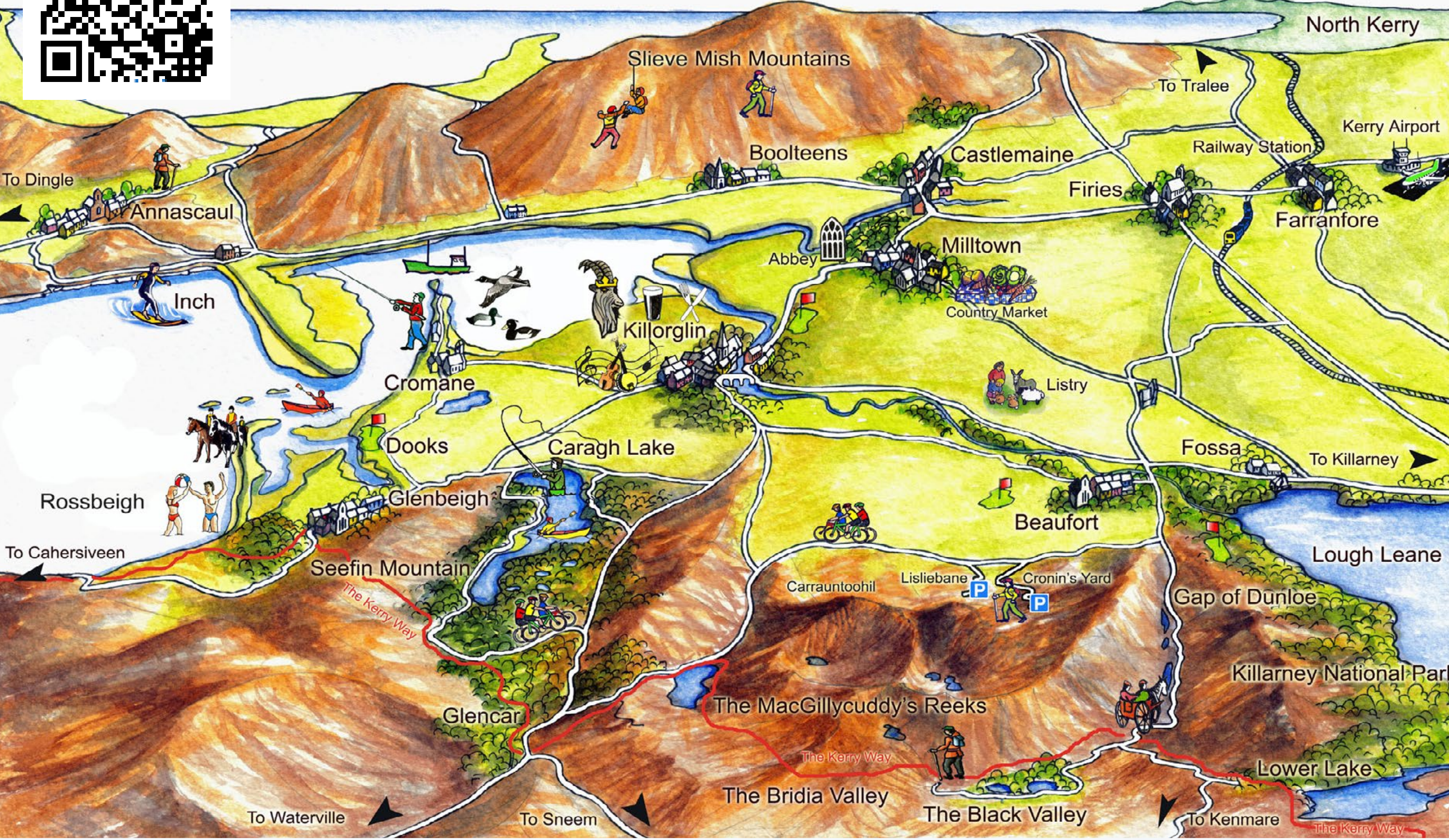
Your palate and taste buds will be pleased that you have landed in this part of the world. In recent years the Mid Kerry area has earned glowing reviews from food-lovers worldwide. Numerous new restaurants have sprouted up throughout the area, all offering a diverse range of delicious dishes. There is an excitement about food here and we want you to join in. Our restaurants support our local food producers, a partnership that will enhance your own dining experience. The food on your plate will - most likely - have been sourced from our hills and waterways, a great combination. There's wild Atlantic salmon caught by multi-generational fishermen in Cromane, still using the traditional small-boat method. The same men bring mussels ashore and in many of our great eateries 'Cromane mussels' is often the dish of choice. Oysters can also be sourced locally. Then there's the award-winning Kerry lamb reared on our hillsides: raised and braised to perfection. Our farmers and fishermen are truly world leaders in implementing innovative methods while striving to maintain their traditional values. They are carrying on crafts that have been passed down through their families for centuries. But there's also a new breed of artisan food producer adding flair to the local scene. Their produce can be tasted and purchased at the ever-popular farmers' market in Milltown. After a meal, no matter where you are in Mid Kerry - there will be a chance to sample the famous welcome of our public houses. During the height of the summer season our hills are truly alive to the sound of music. Outstanding musicianship abounds in the Mid Kerry area. Not surprisingly, there's a host of venues in which to submerge yourself in a traditional Irish music session.



Finest Food



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Get ready to embrace your Mid Kerry experience

We have everything you could possibly need for your perfect holiday. Together we create memories to last a lifetime and, hopefully, we will see you return year after year. This area is an outdoor playground. There's hiking, horseriding, cycling, golfing, surfing, kayaking, boating, and angling. It's all here. All you have to do is experience it. The nightlife here is second to none, enriched by the deep local traditions of song and dance. In recent years the area has broadened its culinary horizons and is now home to some of the best restaurants in Ireland. The area's history is etched in every townland and roadway. There are Castles and Abbeys; famous Ogham Stones and a story at every turn. But let's not forget the most obvious asset of all: the breathtaking natural beauty. Every twist and turn produces the perfect postcard photo. Don't let those moments pass you by. Mid Kerry - we've got it all, from the mountains to the sea and everything in between!

ANNASCAUL & INCH
With breathtaking views of mountains, rivers, glaciated valleys, lakes and sea, the areas of Annascaul and Inch are not to be missed! Sit on a rock at the seduced cove of Bunaneer and watch the sun set over Dingle Bay, the MacGillycuddy's Reeks and the Ring of Kerry or take a rest on Cuchulainn's bed (a mountain top burial chamber) - and you may never want to leave! Annascaul / Inch is in the heart of the Dingle Peninsula, nestled at the foothills of the Sliabh Mish mountain range. Inch boasts a beautiful Blue Flag beach beloved of fishermen, surfers, swimmers and adventurers alike. The beach at Inch consists of six kilometres of golden sand and is a hive of activity. Walkers (The Dingle Way passes through the hills above), water sport enthusiasts and nature lovers all descend on the peninsula to marvel at, and enjoy, its beauty. Don't miss the sunset on Inch: it's you and a fireball sun sinking into a golden ocean. Annascaul is a walker's paradise with walks suited to all, with several 600m+ peaks, 14 looped walks, archaeological and historical features along with guided eco-walks. As with the rest of the Dingle Peninsula, Annascaul boasts a wealth of archaeological remains - Standing Stones, Cromlechs, Ringforts, and much more. The region is steeped in folklore as evidenced by the many evocative place names such as Maumagaranne (translation: mountain pass of the female hogs). Visit the land that moulded and inspired the famous Antarctic explorer Tom Crean, as well as the world-renowned sculptor Jerome Connor. Embrace the friendly hospitality and enjoy the accommodation, restaurants, shops and bars. For more information log on to www.annascaul.ie and www.annascaulwalks.org.

DOOKS & CROMANE
The Dooks and Cromane area is a peaceful retreat where nature soothes the senses. Dooks is just four kilometres from Glenbeigh. To get there you exit the Ring of Kerry at Caragh Bridge and follow the golfers. The Dooks 18-hole links course is one of Ireland's oldest - and finest - with panoramic views of Glenbeigh and Inch beach.

There's also a little secret in Dooks: not many who visit know about its beach, but it is a beauty. Also, lurking in and around the golf course is the Natterjack Toad. It is one of the last strongholds in the country of this creature. Cromane is a small rural fishing village attractively situated eight kilometres west of Killorglin and seven kilometres from Glenbeigh, just ten minutes off the Ring of Kerry. It is a detour to solitude, according to the 2014 Lonely Planet guidebook. The name (In Irish: An Cromán) means hip bone as the low-lying shingle spit is shaped like one when looking at it on a map or from atop one of the surrounding hills. It is cradled between the two most scenic and majestic peninsulas in Ireland: Dingle Peninsula to the North and the Iveragh Peninsula extending westwards. It is one of the few locations in Kerry where you can have a 360-degree view of the Brandon Mountain Range, Sliabh Mish Mountains and the MacGillycuddy's Reeks, all at once. Cromane has its toes in the Atlantic and its pebble beach is family-friendly. This is a place where you can relax, take in the scenery, enjoy the flora and fauna, do some bird watching or just meet the people and have a friendly chat - the choice is yours!

KEEL, BOOLTEENS & CASTLEMAINE
Castlemaine (In Irish: Caisleán na Mainge, meaning 'Castle on the River Maine'), Keel and Boolteens (In Irish: 'Na Bualtínní', meaning 'Forge') - have names hinting at a royal past. Experience the rural idyll with its postcard backdrop of the Sliabh Mish Mountains, a vista of the imposing MacGillycuddy's Reeks with Ireland's highest peak Carrauntoohill, and on its southern edge the River Maine and the vibrant Castlemaine Harbour. Stunning scenery abounds, with mountain passes such as the Short-Mountain-Road and Bothar-na-Gloch offering elevated views over the entire area. Here lies a treasure trove of walking routes from mountain tracks and leafy country lanes to marked forest loops. For the more energetic, take a hike up Caherconree Mountain, near the top of which lies one of the rare examples of an inland promontory fort, affording spectacular views of mountains, hills, valleys and seas. Enjoy salmon and trout fishing on the River Maine. Observe the mussel farming or engage in some birdwatching in Castlemaine Harbour and discover the enchantment

of 'The Quay' with its panoramic views of mountains, sea and farmland. Castlemaine is famed in song as the birth place of the 'Wild Colonial Boy' - Jack Duggan, the infamous Australian outlaw. View the famous Ogham Stones here or simply relax and enjoy a chat with the friendly locals. The area has many warm and welcoming pubs where you'll be entertained with song and story, experiencing rural Irish life first-hand.

GLENBEIGH & ROSSBEIGH
The Glenbeigh/Rossbeigh area is draped in stunning scenery and is making a real name for itself with its fabulous walks with views that will take your breath away. In recent years a walking dub has been set up in Glenbeigh and there's also a walking festival held in the area during August. Highlights of the festival are trips to the 'Windy Gap', around the mystical Lake Coomasaham and the Glenbeigh Horseshoe route. Glenbeigh (In Irish: 'Gleann Beithe', meaning the 'Glen of the Birch Tree') is a charming village on the Ring of Kerry. Because it's hemmed in by mountain and sea, it's no surprise that hill walking and sea angling are among the favourite activities of visitors to the area. It has a great tradition of hospitality as it has been welcoming visitors since the 1850s. There are two family-run hotels, four beautiful caravan parks, a lovely choice of B&Bs, guesthouses and hostels available for visitors to choose from. Then, there's the magnificent Rossbeigh Beach - a sandy peninsula that juts five kilometres into Dingle Bay. It is a godsend. Steeped in history, legend has it that Óisín and Niamh (two mythical Irish figures) galloped off on their white horse into Tir na nÓg (the land of youth) from here. It has that effect on visitors to this day - just let your hair down and feel that sea breeze awaken your senses as sand slips between your toes. In late August every year the Glenbeigh Races dominate the area with a festival of horse-racing on Rossbeigh beach, and plenty of fun in Glenbeigh village. So, just take it all in and rediscover your youth with some time in Glenbeigh and Rossbeigh.

GLENCAR & CARAGH LAKE
Glencar is dominated by the MacGillycuddy's Reeks. Take a break from the hustle and bustle and just enjoy the serenity of this area. It comes into its own when you just let nature take over. The setting of Glencar Valley is dramatic and all five main routes into the valley can be classed among the most spectacular and beautiful of Irish landscape scenery. Every twist and turn will produce that perfect postcard photo - make sure those cameras are charged! It is an outdoor enthusiasts' paradise: the area is naturally enhanced with Lickeen forest, the Caragh River and Caragh Lake adding to its uniqueness. The outstanding preservation of natural habitats has ensured the survival of many important indigenous species of flora and fauna. Glencar offers the lover of the outdoors easy access to the finest facilities from world class salmon and trout fishing, cycling, walking and climbing routes. 'The Kerry Way', which is Ireland's premier long distance walking route winds its way through Glencar from the Black Valley leading into Glenbeigh. Caragh Lake brings breath-taking scenery to a new level. To truly appreciate the Lake's beauty you have to hire a boat and spend a few hours just floating gently with your thoughts. The Lake naturally splits into Upper and Lower levels. Magnificent fishing opportunities are available on the Lower level, with the brown trout a favoured catch. Caragh Lake can be enjoyed on numerous levels: there's a plethora of hiking and walking options as well as award-winning lakeside restaurants to sate your appetite.

MILLTOWN & LISTRY
Milltown (Irish: Baile an Mhúilinn, meaning the town of the mill); the name itself a hint to its rich past. Mill around for a while and explore all it has to offer. Milltown is a small, but rapidly growing, town located near Castlemaine Harbour. Renowned for its warm welcome, it has a rich heritage in music and culture. The area offers a range of attractions and activities for visitors. It is an ideal location for walking and cycling. Explore the many quiet country lanes of the nearby Callinafercy and the nature trails and woods of Kilderry.

This is an exciting area for nature enthusiasts, offering a diverse range of habitats: bog land, marshland and farmland, which attracts shooting enthusiasts in season and bird watching fans all year round. A small, 19th century, former church is the atmospheric location for the Saturday Organic Market. It features local artisan producers, offering everything from the ordinary spud (potato), to the more exotic. To observe more earthy commerce head to the bi-weekly livestock mart just on the edge of town. The Mass Rock - also known as Poul an Aifrinn - is located in Killadahan wood just outside Milltown. Here, Fr. Thadeus Moriarty, a Dominican priest, was arrested by Cromwellian soldiers on the Feast of the Assumption (August 15) in 1653. He was sentenced to death and hanged at Martyr's Hill, Killarney, on October 15, 1653. With a good selection of lively pubs, cafés, restaurants and accommodation, Milltown is an ideal base from which to tour the heart of Kerry. Nearby, Listry is home to one of the last surviving traditional Woollen Mills in Kerry. It was established over 300 years ago to alleviate local poverty. The historic mills, situated on the river Gweestín which flows through Listry, has been creating fabrics and yarn ever since.

KILLORGLIN
Situated in the geographical heart of Kerry on the River Laune is the town of Killorglin. This hill side town is best known for one of Ireland's oldest and probably most unusual festivals - Puck Fair. This annual event celebrated on August 10th, 11th and 12th has its origins in the mists of time, and is regarded as Ireland's oldest street festival. One legend is that Puck Fair honours an event during Cromwellian times when a stampede of wild goats ran through the town warning the residents of the approach of Cromwell's Army. To celebrate this event a wild Puck (male) goat is captured and enthroned on a pedestal - and some 100,000 visitors 'invade' for the celebrations. Other festivals of note during the year are K-Fest, an arts and music festival held on the June bank holiday weekend, and the Flavour of Killorglin, a food festival held in September.

The River Laune (In Irish: 'leamhain', meaning 'elm tree'), its salmon-rich waters and its fertile valley are the origin of the settlement that now is the lively town of Killorglin. The river is still important to the life of the town, with angling, river-bank walks and an active rowing club. Killorglin is the ideal launchpad for touring the Mid Kerry area. It's not a hopping off point, it's the kind of place that you will want to immerse yourself in. This welcoming town bustles with energy. There are some superb places to stay, great pubs, renowned restaurants and cosy cafés. As the largest town in the area it is also popular for shopping for both locals and visitors alike.

BEAUFORT & GAP OF DUNLOE, BLACK VALLEY, THE REEKS
The village of Beaufort and its hinterland was once the filming location for over 70 Hollywood movies in the period 1911-14 (until World War I intervened), courtesy of the O'Kalems movie studio. The splendour of the locale can easily explain Hollywood's seduction. Visit some of the Ireland's oldest native surviving woodlands at Tomies Wood, where the galloping of a startled deer or the roar of O'Sullivan's cascade is all that might interrupt the peace and quiet. Take a stroll in the ruins of Dunloe Castle, a tower house from the medieval 12th Century. Beaufort also offers numerous activities including pony trekking and jaunting carts through the world famous Gap of Dunloe and Black Valley. There's also the beautifully maintained Beaufort Golf Course, an 18-hole golf course, renowned for its historical location and scenic views. For those with less time try the enjoyable nine-hole Dunloe Golf Course, this also features a crazy golf course with a scaled model of the Killarney valley's lakes and mountains. There are over 10km of walking trails here as well as several lakes, some easily accessible, others hidden in high altitude seduction. One of the highlights is the Gap of Dunloe. It is just mesmeric. Once atop 'The Gap' wait to be taken into a new world. It truly is a sight to behold. A walk from the Gap of Dunloe and through The Black Valley is highly recommended. It will be worth it as the view from the summit is magical.