

Ireland: Cork & Kerry

Tour-Only Itinerary

You'd be hard pressed to find another vacation that brings you to the remote and magical wilderness of Gougane Barra—but that's exactly where this adventure begins. Here, at a charming lakeside retreat, you'll meet your local hosts, Neil and Katy. As you cozy up to the crackling fire, Neil details the rich forest trails about to unfold before you. Katy, the master chef, serves innovative farm-fresh cuisine to tempt your palate as you explore the region at your own pace. Your independent adventure is guided by our audio navigation app—leading you through Gougane Barra Forest Park, the seamless sands at Inch Beach, the wilds of Killarney National Park, and the vibrant city of Dingle. If you need support along the way, your friendly local hosts are always available and happy to help.



Highlights

- Follow the Dingle Way along pristine coastline, enjoying views of the Blasket Islands and passing by Neolithic *clochán*—beehive-shaped drystone huts.
- View the countryside through Irish eyes, as your friendly hosts share their knowledge of the area during stays at locally owned accommodations.
- Admire the same view of the Killarney Lakes that impressed Queen Victoria in 1861, as you walk from Ladies' View further into Killarney National Park.
- Explore the beautifully preserved 19th-century country estate of Muckross House, one of County Kerry's famous historic homes.

On all Self-Guided Adventures you can count on ...



A local representative available 24/7.



Gracious accommodations that are a clean, comfortable home away from home.



Detailed maps & route notes featuring turn-by-turn directions and places of interest.



Experts to handle all the details, including moving your luggage between hotels while you're out exploring.



Scheduled taxi transfers to bring you to and from each day's walks.



Access to a Self-Guided Flight Concierge—ask our knowledgeable team to find flights that sync with your planned trip.



Delicious meals—many are included.

Activity Level

This tour is one of our Self-Guided Walking Adventures, rated easy to moderate, with an average of 4–9 miles per day, with options on some days. The terrain includes daily elevation gains and losses of up to 1,200 feet. Walks are on well-maintained dirt trails, either packed or with loose rocks and roots, as well as grassy paths and sandy beaches. This diverse and extensive itinerary includes some of southwest Ireland's most stunning attractions, such as Gougane Barra Lake and Forest Park, Killarney National Park, and the Dingle Peninsula; reaching these locations requires transportation of 1–2 hours. The tour offers full days of walking as well as two layover days with fishing, horseback riding, whale watching, cycling, or shopping options, to name just a few. Remember: preparation is the key to ensuring your tour

readiness; the more you walk or participate in aerobic exercise prior to your trip, the more you will enjoy your experience!

DAY 1

Your Ireland: Cork & Kerry tour begins. Travel from Cork to Gougane Barra. Optional walk: Gougane Barra Nature Park: Slí an Ghaorthaidh (Nature Trail)

2.9 miles, easy, 250-ft. elevation gain and loss

From your meeting point in Cork, you are driven to the small hamlet of Gougane Barra in western Cork, a wonderfully pristine part of Ireland. Your lakeside retreat, a charming family-run hotel, offers captivating views of St. Finbarr's Oratory on a picturesque island. Dating back to the 6th century, this spot holds historical significance as the location where Finbarr, the founder of Cork, established a monastery and hermitage. Today, you can access the island via a brief causeway stroll, immersing yourself in the area's ancient allure.

Surrounded by heather-clad mountains, the lake is a beautiful and peaceful place, and there is a lovely walk available to stretch your legs prior to dinner. Start by wandering from the hotel to explore the island and the oratory, then continue along a paved road to access the Slí an Ghaorthaidh (Nature Trail). This gentle and level path showcases informative stops and enchanting woodland sculptures, providing an opportunity to immerse yourself in Gougane Barra's rich biodiversity. Conveniently, the trail loops back to your hotel, concluding your introduction of the area. A memorable dinner of refined Irish country cooking is included nightly during your stay here in the wilds of County Cork.

Included Meals: Dinner

DAY 2

Gougane Barra Nature Park: Sli Laoi to Slí an Choim Rua to Sli Sleibhe to Sli an Easa. Stay Put Day

4.8 miles, easy to moderate, 600-ft. elevation gain and loss OR 6.1 miles, easy to moderate, 1,000-ft. elevation gain and loss

Awakening to lakeside tranquility and a full Irish breakfast today, you'll delve deeper into the enchanting Gougane Barra Forest Park. Offering an array of trails with varying lengths and difficulty levels, each route showcases the area's breathtaking landscapes of mountains, valleys, streams, and lakes. Originally established as a forest park in the early 1960s and officially opened in 1966, the valley and lake of Gougane Barra boast dramatic geological features shaped by glacial origins. Spanning over 350 acres, the forest park was planted in the late 1930s over former farmland, now adorned with impressive stands of lodgepole pine, Sitka spruce, and Japanese larch.

Today, your agenda revolves around exploring the diverse trails within Gougane Barra Forest Park. The recommended Sli Laoi (Lee Trail) offers a serene stroll along the valley floor, tracing the path of the River Lee. As you ascend to the valley's head, transition to the Slí an Choim Rua (Red Coom Trail), characterized by striking red sandstone rock formations and a forested pathway leading to a scenic viewpoint. Next, embark on the Sli Sleibhe (Mountain Trail), the longest and most challenging hike, rewarding you with exhilarating vistas of the valley, lake, and surrounding forests. This trail eventually circles back to the main trailhead.

For those seeking an extra adventure, the Sli an Easa (Waterfalls Walk) presents a one-hour uphill loop with panoramic viewpoints and two observation platforms, promising stunning views and a memorable experience.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 3

Derrycunihy Church to Killarney. Move on Day

6.8 miles, easy to moderate, 850-ft. elevation gain and 1.050-ft. elevation loss

Today begins with a drive (just over an hour) over Moll's Gap, with the famous Ladies' View over the Killarney Lakes, and to the start of your walk at Derrycunihy Church on Galway's Bridge. The route takes you through the Killarney National Park, home to the only natural herd of red deer in Britain or Ireland. You continue through the mountains to the Torc Waterfall and on to Muckross House and Abbey, where Queen Victoria paid a visit to the Herbert family in 1861. Today, many of the rooms in this magnificent mansion have been restored to their original Victorian splendor, and between the months of April and July, the

mature rhododendrons of Muckross Gardens are in spectacular bloom. Adjacent to the house are the Muckross Traditional Farms, which portray the farming methods and way of life in a typical rural community of the 1930s. The workshops, shops, and restaurant are all worth exploring. From here, a taxi delivers you to your accommodation for the next two nights in Killarney. Enjoy dinner on your own tonight, either at your hotel or at a local restaurant of your choosing.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 4

Layover day in Killarney. Stay Put Day

At your doorstep you have a plethora of things to do in and around the town of Killarney, from a range of walks, to castle touring, town strolling and shopping, bike riding, or pony trekking. Perhaps one of the best-known natural sites is the Gap of Dunloe, a narrow mountain pass between Macgillycuddy's Reeks and Purple Mountain. About seven miles in length from north to south, within it are five lakes—Coosaun Lough, Black Lake, Cushnavally Lake, Auger Lake, and Black Lough—all linked by the River Loe. Connecting the first two lakes is the Wishing Bridge, so-called because it is said that wishes made while upon it are destined to come true. Nearby is Ross Castle, standing on the shore of Lough Leane. The original home of the O'Donoghue Ross Chieftains in the 15th century, the castle has been magnificently restored. The site holds evidence of human habitation going back 9,000 years, with one of Europe's earliest Bronze Age copper mines dating back some 4,500 years. One walking option here is a 90-minute route around the archaeological sites of Ross Island. You can also walk into the vibrant and charming town center of Killarney, with the tall-spired St. Mary's Cathedral, as well as a Gothic Franciscan church. While in Killarney, enjoy the town's long tradition of late-evening shopping.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 5

Ventry to Dunquin. Move on Day

7.6, 8.2, or 9.2 miles, easy to moderate, 950-ft. elevation gain 850-ft. elevation loss

This morning's destination is the Dingle Peninsula, just over an hour's drive away. A first short stop is at the fabulous Inch Beach, made famous in David Lean's 1970 film, *Ryan's Daughter*. The drive takes you

past Dingle (you'll have plenty of time upon your return to explore the town and surroundings) and on to Ventry Beach, where you begin the day's walk. The route starts along the beach before rising slightly to skirt the base of Mount Eagle. Here, spectacular views open up over the Blasket Islands and the Atlantic Ocean as you pass beside Neolithic *clochán*, beehive-shaped drystone huts. The walk ends at the excellent Blasket Islands visitor center, which provides an informative overview of the communities that once lived on the remote islands. You soon return to Dingle, perhaps for a pint of Guinness at one of the town's 52 pubs, before walking to dinner at a restaurant of your choosing.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 6

Layover Day in Dingle. Optional walk to Dingle Lighthouse. Stay Put Day

3.8 miles, easy to moderate, 100-ft. elevation gain and loss

Dingle beckons exploration with its vibrant colors, bustling fishing port, cozy pubs, and charming shops. Venture into its lively streets to discover the local market, inviting eateries, and picturesque harbor. Nearby, scenic walks and boating excursions await.

Today, consider embarking on an optional short walk from your hotel, offering a refreshing seaside jaunt to the enchanting Dingle Lighthouse. Along the way, soak in captivating views of Dingle Harbour, explore historical sites, and observe local flora and fauna. Pass through Cúilín, quaint cottages built by Lord Ventry, and meander along the rocky shore to discover seaweeds and shellfish. Stop by the Coastguard Station, Hussey's Folly, and Slaidín beach to appreciate the coastal beauty.

Dingle, a vibrant town with just 2,000 residents, thrives as a tourist hotspot, fishing hub, and agricultural center. Embark on boat trips for whale-watching and deep-sea fishing adventures. Explore the town's pubs, offering delightful food and unique merchandise, ranging from Wellington boots to blankets. Dive into the local music scene with traditional Irish tunes filling the air in the evening. During the day, visit the Dingle Record Shop or the Dingle Music School to immerse yourself in Irish music culture. Don't miss out on exploring local pottery craft during your stay.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 7

Travel to Limerick. Your *Ireland: Cork & Kerry* tour concludes

After breakfast, an included taxi ride from Dingle to Limerick is provided (2.5 hours) to make your train or bus connections.

Included Meals: Breakfast

What's Included

Tour Only

Air Package

Boutique accommodations	✓	✓
8 on-tour meals: 6 breakfasts and 2 dinners	✓	✓
Ride with GPS (custom downloadable GPS route notes and turn-by-turn voice navigation; smartphone required)	✓	✓
Orientation meeting with a Country Walkers representative	✓	✓
Local representative available 24/7	✓	✓
Scheduled on-tour taxi and luggage transportation (Please note: If unable to walk, it is possible to travel with your luggage from one accommodation to the next at no additional charge.)	✓	✓
Roundtrip international airfare		✓
Business-class upgrades available		✓
One extra night in Cork and one extra night in Bunratty		✓
Pre- and post-trip breakfasts		✓
Detailed information for your independent travel to/from arrival and departure airports		✓