

The Beara way Ireland, a magical walking tour

In addition to physical and conditional aspects and motives, walking also has an important role for many people in what is called "*clearing your head*". Being able to let go of the daily, the rational, the bleeps and the beeps or the "must" – *or for a while longer*. To instead "*may*" and allow the feeling, the emotion, the fantasy or the imagination more. To this end, the Beara Way, a walking route on the peninsula of the same name on the southwest coast of Ireland, is an excellent, inviting and inspiring theatre.



Foto's: Fáilte Ireland. Oranginas.

The first question this theater raises is how the name Beara came about. The rational explanation says that the name Beara comes from the Kerry dialect word *béarach*, *béar* [r]a, which refers to "*rocks on the coast against which the sea breaks with great force*". Another possible explanation is a legend that tells of a king who was wounded in a losing battle on his peninsula. His followers took him to a fairy, who healed him, after which the king sailed to Spain to marry his beloved Beara, the daughter of the King of Castile. He then sailed back to the peninsula with a large army, recaptured it and put Beara on the highest mountain on the island. He showed her his country and said, "I call it after your name: Beara." Thus it happened, the island bears its name to this day. What else are you going through that? Walking across the magical Beara stage, the choice is yours, even if it's just for a moment.

A magical landscape

Central to the magical Beara Peninsula are two mountain ranges: the Caha Mountains and the Slieve Miskish Mountains. The more than 150 kilometres long, signposted hiking trail – an Irish National Trail – runs like a loop around these mountain ranges. There are possibilities to extend the route along the way, for example by going to Bear Island, to Dursey Island, where the only cable car in Ireland can be found, or to cut off a bit by crossing the mountain ranges.

Of all the peninsulas in this southwestern part of Ireland, Beara has remained the most original and purest. The area has a large concentration of historical and archaeological sites, 510 have been counted so far. While walking you can admire these sites extensively: standing stones, stone circles, Ogham stones, dolmens (dolmens) and other megalithic structures can be found in surprising, remote, rugged and wild places. You can also encounter more recently built historic ring forts, towers, castles, signal towers and memorial stones. The clearly visible past of this peninsula, with mountains and lakes on a dark green ochre-brown background, offers you enough images to let your imagination run wild. The peninsula breathes magic and history.

A wild palette

There are a number of beautiful fishing villages on the peninsula. There are houses, right on the road, in all kinds of colors. You can walk over convex hills and soggy, soggy or springy peatlands. After about three days of hiking, you will also be completely used to the many local sheep. You don't imitate their bleating anymore. They have become part of the landscape, just like you. Via sheep paths, country roads, cart tracks, grassy paths, valleys, light and sometimes steep climbs, some rocks, old forests, wild rhododendrons, a lake and another peatland you often get to see the most fantastic views of Bantry Bay or Kenmare River.



Or you climb Hungry Hill, 685 meters high, whether or not read in the book of the same name by Dame Daphne du Maurier (1943) about two Irish families and their "fate" to a copper mine on Hungry Hill. A nearby copper museum can bring you back to reality from the prose. Another recommendation is a visit to Bere Island for a circular walk. Here you have the opportunity to spot the local fauna, especially on the rugged west coast of the island. Dolphins, puffins, kittiwakes, porpoises, seals, millions of birds and many more animals can be seen here. It is said that, with some luck, whales can be seen here. We do not give any guarantee on this. Seeing is also imagining. The island is easily accessible by ferry from Castletown Bearhaven. It is a nautical mile, or two kilometers, of sailing.



wilderness

Legendary past

Furthermore, from the colorful village of Eyeries you can take an extremely beautiful loop walk northwest, along the jagged coastline of Kilcatherine Point. In the right weather, you can experience the crashing rolling meter-high waves of the Atlantic Ocean and see the tranquil rock that was once the *Hag of Beara*. She was one of the oldest mythological creatures, in the form of an old, strong woman who, upon her arrival, not only brought winter with her, but also had tremendous power over life and death. According to legend, the *Hag of Beara* was petrified by the local saint, St Catherine. That's how they did it, even in the past, with powerful women. She can still be seen, in the shape of a chair, waiting for her husband: Manannán, the Irish sea god.



The Way partly uses a path over which O'Sullivan Beare, the Lord of Beara and Bantry, headed north on New Year's Eve 1602 with about 400 warriors and 600 civilians. This Irish centurion marched nearly 500 kilometers in two weeks, constantly waging a rearguard action with the invading English army. Lord Beare's battle ended in defeat. Almost his entire entourage got lost during the hard journey and he eventually had to flee to Spain himself. A comment at the right time, to the right people, in the right pub about this Lord Beare (a national hero) and your evening can't be more broken.

The Beara Way offers many opportunities to let go completely. It is the ideal pause button, with or without the help of the [folk music of the Chieftains](#). In this video about O'Sullivan's March, you can also see beautiful images of Glendalough, on [display on the Wicklow Way](#): a multi-day walking route in eastern Ireland about which a report previously appeared on this website.

General route information

- The Beara way is a circular walk of 206 km.
- The route often goes around the mountains, follows the flanks.
- The route becomes heavier after rain, because the surface becomes soggy, wet and muddy.
- The marks are fine.
- The Ordnance Survey hiking *guide* or *the OS map* number 84, 5th edition, suffices as navigation.



Steve Miskish mountains



The way



Coast



Beara (inlands)



frequent sea views