Beara Way
Slí Bhéara

Adrigole Glengarriff Kealkill

Donal Cam O'Sullivan Beare and the Beara-Breifne March

In 1602 Munster was ravaged by war. The English forces of Elizabeth I had defeated the Irish and Spanish at the Battle of Kinsale and advanced to capture the territory of Donal Cam O'Sullivan Beare, Chieftain of Beara. With many Irish chiefs in submission to the English crown, his continued support for the Irish cause and loyalty to Philip II of Spain was a last barrier to English ambitions to secure crown rule in Munster.

O'Sullivan Beare's main stronghold was Dunboy Castle overlooking the harbour of Berehaven. In June 1602, after an eleven-day siege, English forces breached the walls of Dunboy, killed its last defenders and forced the local population into submission. O'Sullivan Beare and an army of supporters withdrew to the Coomerkane Valley, near Glengarriff, and launched guerrilla attacks on their enemies.

Following a siege, the English army struck a blow at O'Sullivan Beare and captured his herd of four thousand sheep, two thousand cattle and one hundred ponies. The loss of supplies of milk, butter and meat, as well as essential pack animals, made it impossible to remain in the valley.

On New Year's Eve 1602, faced with almost certain starvation, O'Sullivan Beare fled with four hundred fighting men and six hundred camp followers and women, children, servants and porters: a thousand men and women on an epic march northwards.

O'Sullivan Beare was counting on his ally, O'Rourke of Breifne, to provide refuge at Leitrim Castle three hundred kilometres to the north. Travelling through Ireland at a time of war and severe food shortages they were viewed by local chiefs as outcasts and attacked. The need to stay ahead of their enemies meant that they were often unable to bury their dead or carry off their wounded. Women carried infants and many of the camp followers could not keep up. By the time they reached the River Shannon their numbers were as low as three- to four-hundred.

With enemies on either side of the river they crossed at night in a boat made of the skins of twelve slaughtered horses, the meat almost certainly eaten by the starving in the camp. Two days later, at Aughrim, their path was blocked by English-led cavalry and infantry. O'Sullivan Beare's camp had no choice but to fight. Against all odds an exhausted army of refugees defeated greatly superior forces but were unable to rest. They had to travel a twenty mile detour during the night to escape further attack. As the Connaught mercenaries among O'Sullivan Beare's camp began to disappear and return home, the remaining refugees were continuously threatened.

On the fourteenth day O'Sullivan Beare reached Leitrim castle. Out of the original one thousand followers only thirty five remained.

The Beara-Breifne and Beara Ways

The Beara-Breifne Way follows the fourteen-day march taken by Donal O'Sullivan Beare and one thousand supporters in 1603. The Way, the longest in Ireland, runs almost the length of the country and takes the walker and cyclist to some of its most beautiful and least explored areas: along the coast of the Beara Peninsula, across six mountain ranges, along the banks of the River Shannon and through the lake regions of Roscommon and Leitrim. The landscape contains an extraordinary variety of heritage sites - prehistoric features, castle ruins and religious and battle sites - many of which bear witness to the march of four hundred years ago.

The Beara-Breifne Way interlinks a series of local ways.

The local way on the Beara Peninsula is called The Beara Way. It is approximately 220 km in length and completes a circuit of breathtaking coastal and mountain scenery, before turning inland to Kealkil.

Both Ways follow off-road tracks and quiet back roads. However, traffic has increased in recent years and walkers and cyclists are asked to take care, particularly on the busy roads entering and leaving towns and villages. The Beara-Breifne and the Beara Ways cross both public and private lands and dogs are not permitted on either Way. Access to private lands is by kind permission of local landowners, arranged by the local community, and especial thanks are extended to both landowners and community groups for their assistance in making this venture possible.

Walkers should be aware that both the The Beara Way and The Beara-Breifne Way are closed to the public for one day each year, the 31st January.

Glengarriff to Kenmare

Walking
Leaving Glengarriff on the N71 for 500m you enter the oak woods and follow the mountain track to Esk Mountain. At the top of the ridge there are views of Kenmare and Bantry Bay. When you drop down you will pass Bonane Heritage Park. The park is unique in that it has an abundance of well preserved multi-period archaeological sites including a Stone Circle, a Ringfort, standing stones and Fulacht Fiadh. The route follows the old Glengarriff - Kenmare road into Kenmare town. This is a 4-5 hour walk. Highest point 300m.

Glengarriff to Adrigole

Walking
The route takes walkers into Glengarriff Woods Nature Reserve. The route enters Coomerkane Valley and rises up to a height of 500m north of Sugarloaf Mountain caution to be taken on this high mountain pass. The route reaches the public road close to massmount on the adrigole side. Without stops, allow 4-5 hours to complete this section. There are also great views of Bantry Bay and the Sheep's Head peninsula. This is a hard walk.

Cycling
Cyclists have a steady 5km climb out of Glengarrif on the R572 until the road becomes more level and the expanse of Bantry Bay comes into view. This road is wide but busy so caution is needed. After a further 2 km, the cycle route leaves the main road and follows the old Glengarrif to Adrigole Road where it joins with the walking route to descend into the parish of Adrigole.
Approx. 13 km.

Glengarriff to Kealkill

Walking
Walkers skirt the famous coast and oak woods of Glengarriff for the first 5km as they follow the busy N71 towards Bantry. The route then turns inland onto a quieter back road then off-road to rise along the shoulder of Cobduff with stunning views of Bantry Bay and Whiddy Island. Back on tarmac the walk negotiates a series of well-signed junctions in the vicinity of the Coomhola valley then heads northeast for circa 4 km before going off-road onto a track which rises over the moorland area known as 'The Bulls Pocket.' There are fantastic over-the-shoulder views of Bantry Bay to the south and of Cnoc Baoi to the north. Back on tarmac walkers will arrive at a junction to be directed south along a winding road to Carriganass Castle on the outskirts of Kealkill. Total walking time: 3 - 4 hours. Highest point on route - 130m.

Cycling
This route uses quiet and scenic country roads for the most part but for the first 5km cyclists follow the wide but busy N71 towards Bantry. The route then turns inland along the Coomhola valley in the shadow of Coomhola mountain and Cnoc Baoi, the highest peak in Cork. Following directions at a series of well-signed junction takes cyclists along a winding road to reach Carriganass Castle on the outskirts of the Kealkil. Approx. 20 km.

Along the Way

1 The **ruined church of Massmount** was formerly the parish church for Adrigole. It is not known when Massmount was built but it remains a popular local scenic spot.

2 It is probable that, like other standing stones, **Leitrim Beg Standing Stone** originally marked a burial place or boundary and established a sacred dimension to the landscape.

3 In the late-megalithic period the cremated remains of the dead were sometimes buried in structures such as the **wedge grave at Ballynahown**. These features get their name from how the chamber is "wedged", becoming narrower and sloping to the back. The entrance was usually aligned with the setting sun. It has been suggested that this relates to beliefs concerning the passing of the dead to the afterlife.

4 In December 1602, following a siege by English forces, Donal O'Sullivan Beare fled **Derrynafulla Doire** na fola (oak-wood of the blood) in the Coomerkane Valley, with one thousand of his supporters, on the epic march north to Leitrim that inspired the Beara-Breifne Way.

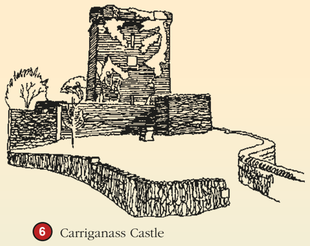
5 **Bantry Bay** is the largest in southwest Ireland and one of Europe's deepest natural harbours. The bay is home to four islands: Bere, Whiddy and Dursey, all of which are inhabited, and Garnish Island which is famous for its Italianate gardens.
Bantry Bay has featured prominently in the naval history of Ireland. Following the Irish-Spanish defeat at the Battle of Kinsale in 1601, English forces under Sir George Carew landed on Bere Island to prepare for their successful assault on Dunboy Castle, the main stronghold of O'Sullivan Beare.

In March 1689 a French fleet sailed into the Bay with 7,000 soldiers, arms, ammunition and money for James II in his war with William of Orange. The English fleet entered the bay and suffered tactical losses in the ensuing battle.
In December 1796 a French Armada with 15,000 troops left France to support the Irish Republican movement under Theobald Wolfe Tone. Severe weather conditions forced most of the ships out of Bantry Bay and the battered fleet returned to France. To defend against further attack a series of Martello towers were built around the Irish and British coasts, including Bantry Bay, and several fine examples survive here to this day.
The strategic importance of the Bay was again underlined when Britain based its Atlantic fleet in Berehaven during World War I, and built large gun batteries on Bere Island.
Transforming the local economy, an oil terminal was built on Whiddy Island in 1966. Tragically, explosions on the tanker Betelgeuse in 1979 resulted in the deaths of fifty-one people.
For centuries the fishing fleets of Europe fished in the Bay, paying harbour dues and fishing taxes to the O'Sullivan Clan, who controlled the area. Boats of many nationalities still fish and sail here these waters and are best observed on a stormy day as they shelter in the Bay's protective embrace.

6 **Carriganass Castle,** the best preserved of the tower houses of the O'Sullivan Beare chieftaincy, was built in 1540 but surrendered to English forces in 1602. Donal Cam O'Sullivan attacked the English occupied castle with cannon-fire, destroying much of the northern wall after which the castle was abandoned. With its spectacular views perched above the River Owvane, the castle remains a focal point for the Kealkill community and has recently been opened to the public.

Country code for Walkers

- Respect farmland and the rural environment.
- Do not interfere with livestock, crops, machinery or other property.
- Do not light any fires, especially near forests.
- Leave all farm gates as you find them.
- Always keep children in close control and supervision.
- Please ensure you have good hiking footwear & rain gear.
- Keep away from livestock along the trail.
- Carry a mobile phone and inform someone about your intended itinerary.
- Do not enter farmland if you have dogs with you.
- Always use gates, stiles or other recognised access points, avoid damage to fences, hedges and walls.
- Take all litter home.
- Take special care on country roads.
- Avoid making unnecessary noise.
- Protect wildlife and plants and trees.
- Take heed of warning signs they are there for your protection.
- If following a recognised walking route keep to the waymarked route.
- Immediately report any damage caused by your actions to the farmer or landowner.
- Do not block farm entrances when parking.



6 Carriganass Castle

KEY TO SYMBOLS
Swimming
Accommodation
Food
Post Office
Doctor

DON'T FORGET
to collect your
Beara Way Stamps
WHICH CAN BE FOUND ALONG THE ROUTE
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE VISIT
www.bearabreifneway.ie

CLANS OF THE AREA

As, historically, there is often more than one version of some placenames, spellings used on this map may differ from those found on O.S. maps, literature and even some road signs.

Emergency: 999 / 911
Meteorogical Weather Report: 1550123850

The Beara Way is developed by:
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