

Beara Way

Slí Bhéara

Castletownbere Allihies Eyeries

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.

Allihies Copper Mine Trail / Ballydonegan Loop

Walkers can start at Allihies Village and have the option of

1. Two and half-hour walk
2. Four hour walk
3. Eight hour walk

Note: All routes are linked and extended from each other.

Allihies Copper Mine Trail

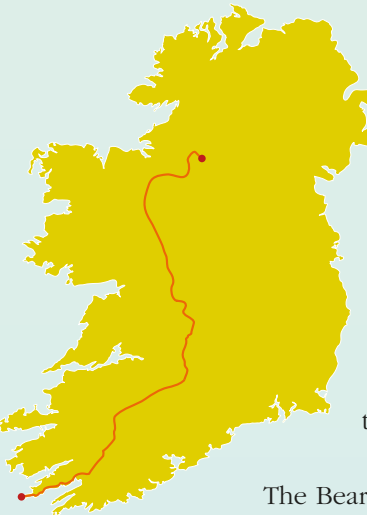
Follow the route to Ballydonegan beach. This route follows the coastline and rises up to the north engine building which links you back to the village (2.5 hour walk) or continue on along the valley until you meet the company track which also links you back to the village (4 hour walk)

Ballydonegan loop

At the company track, walkers can continue up to Knockroe west along the hill track, until you meet the Beara Way along the coast which brings you back to the village. (8 hour walk)

Dursey Island Oileán Baoi

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.

Allihies to the Cable Car at Garinish Point

Walking

This 4-5 hour walk passes Ballydonegan Beach and follows the coast with its fantastic views of the Skellig and Scariff Islands. At Firkeel Gap there are two possible routes to Dursey Cable Car:

(2) take the Crow Head route south with its views of Bantry Bay and Dursey Island. The highest point on this route is 150m. The difficulty on this route is rated as moderate.

Please be aware there is no mobile/cell phone coverage or public phones at the western tip of the peninsula.

Cycling

Cyclists climb the R575 Castletownbere Road to Bealbarnish Gap from where there are great views of Ballydonegan Bay. Here the route turns right for Garinish point. This road is narrow and winding and can be busy during the summer season. The route is approximately 10km long.

Allihies to Eyeries

Walking

3-4 hours: Leaving Allihies the route passes the tall chimney known as the North Engine and follows an old disused mining track and mountain pass with magnificent views of Coulagh Bay. Mid-way walkers can take the spur to Urhan for refreshments or continue along off-road tracks to reach the colourful village of Eyeries. The highest point on this route is 160m. The difficulty on this route is rated as moderate.

Cycling

The road out of Allihies passes through rugged hills and is quiet and narrow with some horseshoe bends. The steep climbs reward with great coastal views and after 6 km the road eases for a gentler cycle into Eyeries. Village to village is approx. 16 km.

Allihies to Castletownbere

Walking

4-5 hours. The walk follows a disused mining track over Knockgour with sweeping views of Kenmare Bay on the ascent and of Berehaven and Bantry Bay on the descent. The route passes through a state forest before entering Castletownbere. The highest point on this route is 250m. The difficulty on this route is rated as moderate.

Cycling

Cyclists climb to Bealbarnish Gap with great views of Ballydonegan Bay to the rear. The route veres left, dropping to sea-level and then climbs again to Gour. At Clongaskan junction cyclists can take the low road which is narrow, winding and busy, but which takes you to historic Dunboy Castle and Puxley's mansion. The alternative high road is quieter and has excellent sea views. Both routes approximate 16km.



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.

Along the Way

- 1 Betony** - *Stachys Officialis*, is a wild flower, rare to Ireland, but found around Garinish Head, a National Heritage Area. For centuries Betony has been used for its medicinal and remedial properties and, in particular, for nervous complaints. In former times Betony was also worn in an amulet to ward off evil spirits.
- In the late-megalithic period the cremated remains of the dead were sometimes buried in structures such as the **wedge grave at Bealbarnish Gap**. 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.
- The **man-made beach at Ballydonegan** is a popular amenity; the sand is the result of 100,000 tonnes of crushed quartz washed down from the copper mines.
- In Irish mythology the **Fomorians** were said to be a semi-divine race of giants who inhabited Ireland before the flood and the arrival of the Tuatha De Danann, the gods of the Goidelic (Gaelic) population. The activities of giants and gods were often believed to have created striking or unusual landscapes. Oral tradition tells of how Coulagh Bay was marked by fighting giants. Both giants lived in Gortahig (Giant's field) until one day the larger giant chased the other to Rahish point from where he leapt onto Carigeel Island. A foot shaped print can be seen in the rocks on the shore at Rahish point and also on Carigeel Island where the smaller giant landed. The larger giant flung his axe decapitating his opponent. The body and head fell into the sea washing ashore at Travaud and Travara Strands respectively. Local tradition claims that standing stones at Caherkeen (Fort of the body) and Ardacluggin (Height of the head) mark where the body and head are buried.
- Overlooking Berehaven, **Dunboy Castle** was built in the 11th century and became the seat of power of the O'Sullivan Beare clan. In 1602 the castle was refortified to withstand attack from English forces. However, after an eleven day siege, English artillery breached the walls and Dunboy Castle fell. The Puxley family from England built a mansion on the site of the ruined castle and, in 1868, profits from the Puxley-owned copper mines enabled Henry Puxley to undertake major gothic extensions. In 1921 **Puxley Manor** was left a partial ruin after the IRA burnt it during the War of Independence. The house has now been renovated as a hotel.
- Stone circles were used for ritual and/or burial purposes. Many, such as **the stone circle at Derreenataggart**, seem to have been aligned to honour solar or astronomical events.