

Ring of Kerry Drive Guide

Ireland's most famous scenic loop, from Kerry or Cork

Route map: the 179km Ring of Kerry loop around the Iveragh Peninsula, drawn anticlockwise from Killarney. (Map image to be added once finalised.)

At a Glance

Stretch	Distance	Highlights
Killarney to Killorglin	~22km	National Park, Ross Castle
Killorglin to Cahersiveen	~43km	Rossbeigh, Kells Bay
The Skellig Ring detour	~18km	Kerry Cliffs, Portmagee
Waterville to Sneem	~35km	Coomakista, Derrynane, Staigue
Sneem to Killarney	~61km	Kenmare, Molls Gap, Ladies View

Safety Tips

Drive **ANTICLOCKWISE** from Killarney (towards Killorglin first). The tour coaches travel clockwise by convention, so going the opposite way keeps you out of the queue at narrow sections and busy viewpoints. Many stretches are single lane with passing places, so keep your speed down and use pull-ins. The Skellig Ring is very narrow and not suitable for large vehicles. Start before 9am to beat the coaches. Fuel up in Killarney or Kenmare. Drive on the left.

Kerry & Cork Airport Access

Kerry Airport is the closest gateway, about 20 minutes from Killarney and the start of the loop, though it has a limited number of routes. Cork Airport is the best-connected, around 90 minutes (85 to 95km) via the N22, with far more flights and car hire suppliers.

Book your hire car at getcarhire.com/ireland.htm and compare all the main suppliers in one search, with insurance and taxes included.

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Food & Pubs Along the Ring of Kerry

Kerry is seafood country, so look out for Atlantic chowder, Valentia crab, oysters and the day's catch, alongside hearty Irish classics. Time your meals early or late to dodge the midday coach crowds. Stops are listed in anticlockwise driving order.

Killorglin (start)

Jack's Coastguard (just off the route) is renowned for roast lamb, seafood chowder and Guinness stew with clifftop ocean views.

Kells Bay

Kells Bay Gardens Cafe, a hidden gem down a winding lane, for homemade lunches and good coffee.

Cahersiveen

QC's, run by the Quinlan fishing family and a former Seafood Restaurant of the Year, famous for Valentia crabmeat and smoked salmon on brown bread, and its Dingle prawns. The Oratory Pizza & Wine Bar sits in a converted church. The Fertha Bar pairs food with live music on Fri and Sat.

Portmagee (Skellig Ring)

The Fisherman's Bar serves excellent seafood right by the harbour, a perfect Skellig Ring lunch stop.

Waterville

The historic Butler Arms (Chaplin's hotel) and the dog-friendly Beachcove Cafe for fish and chips on the promenade.

Sneem

Cosy cafes around the two greens for coffee, cake or an ice cream.

Kenmare (finish)

The gourmet capital. The Lime Tree (in an 1832 building) for oak-smoked Kenmare salmon, seafood chowder and Sneem black pudding; No. 35 for pork and Kenmare Bay smokies; Strawberry Field Pancake Cottage for a lighter, affordable stop; the Boathouse Bistro for seafood on the bay.

Best Pubs for a Pint & Trad Music

Murphy's Bar, Killarney

Established 1955, famous for one of the finest pints of Guinness in Kerry and live traditional music at weekends.

O'Connor's, Killarney

A characterful spot for a pint and a trad session in the heart of town.

PF McCarthy's, Kenmare

One of Kenmare's oldest pubs, a reliable bet for great Guinness and impromptu trad.

The Fertha Bar, Cahersiveen

Good food and live music on Friday and Saturday nights.

Menus and opening hours change, especially out of season, so it is worth checking ahead before relying on any one stop.