

# The Getaway: International

FROM DUBLIN TO DINGLE, EXPLORING IRELAND'S SOUTHERN COAST

The wild Dingle Peninsula

IRELAND may well be the friendliest place on Earth. Where else are you greeted with *Céad míle fáilte*, a hundred thousand welcomes?

It's also very scenic, which is why, during a recent visit to this welcoming country, my friends and I decided to take a journey along Ireland's breathtaking southern coast. We began with a day-trip from Dublin to the countryside southwest of the city, a landscape lush with brilliant shades of green, so striking, we could barely tear our eyes away.

Our destination was the Irish National Stud Farm at Tully in Kildare, a popular draw for tourists. A sprawling expanse of manicured lawns and cheerful flower blooms awaited us at the farm, where we learned about the horse-breeding process and the stud business. Even though it wasn't breeding season we saw many of the farm's stallions, including four retired race horses, grazing in the paddocks.

There we also visited the Irish Horse Museum and the peaceful Japanese Gardens, created by the Japanese gardener, Eida, and his son Minoru, for Colonel William Hall-Walker between 1906 and 1910. The gardens, which trace man's life journey in twenty stages from birth to beyond, are known for their horticultural beauty.

## AGE-OLD PORTS AND HISTORIC FORTS

The next day we traveled south toward Kinsale in County Cork, the city scenery giving way to rolling fields, pristine woodlands and the verdant hills of Counties Carlow and Wicklow.

At the ancient port of Waterford we visited

Waterford House of Crystal, where we watched talented craftspeople blow and cut exquisite tableware and trophies.

Kinsale, an old fishing town, is known for its sailing as well as its foodie scene, due in part to its active fishing fleet. After checking into the Carlton Kinsale Hotel & Spa, we joined Barry Moloney of Don & Barry's Kinsale Historic Stroll for a walking tour of the town.

Today, the town's narrow streets are lined with artsy shops, pubs and restaurants, but Barry took us to times past with mesmerizing stories that began with Kinsale's medieval-walled origins on up to the sinking of the RMS Lusitania eleven miles offshore in 1915.

Then he led us through the late 17th-century star-shaped Charles Fort just outside of town, worth a visit for its historical significance (it's associated with both the Williamite War of 1689-91 and the Civil War 1922-23) and for its spectacular views across the River Bandon to Kinsale Harbour, speckled with pleasure yachts and bobbing fishing boats.

## A PLACE OF WINDSWEPT, WILD BEAUTY

After traveling to the seaside town of Kenmare the next day, we began our drive along part of Ireland's stunning Ring of Kerry, a circular drive twisting 112 miles along rugged, wave-washed cliffs, where the windswept, craggy coast meets soaring, fog-shrouded mountains.

Our bus maneuvered along switchback bends with jaw-dropping views of the Upper and Muckross Lakes as we drove along N71 to

Killarney National Park, a beautiful wilderness of ancient oak forest inhabited by Ireland's only wild herd of native red deer.

There, during a tour of stately 19th-century Muckross House and gardens, we visited studios with potters, weavers and bookbinders at work, and a craft shop where you can purchase some of their creations.

Outside, we climbed aboard a horse-drawn Jaunting Car, or trap, for a peaceful tour of the park. I sat with our loquacious driver, or jarvey, while my friends rode in the back, as we clip-clopped through lush meadows and woodland to the tranquil ruins of 15th-century Muckross Abbey.

## EUROPE'S WESTERMOST POINT

Later that day we arrived at Benner's, a family-run Irish hotel located in the center of Dingle Town, a town known for its traditional Irish music.

The Dingle Peninsula, Europe's westernmost point, is a place of wild beauty, where waves crash upon rocky headlands and sheep cling to hillsides like Velcro. The next day we drove the 32 mile loop to Sleat Head, stopping at the Dingle Brewing Company to sample Tom Crean's famed Irish lager.

After experiencing Ireland's friendly people, traditional music, and nature at its very best, we didn't want our tour to end. But with a hundred thousand welcomes, I figured we could always return once more.

BY AGENT MELODY MOSER

IF YOU GO: FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT [WWW.IRELAND.COM](http://WWW.IRELAND.COM).



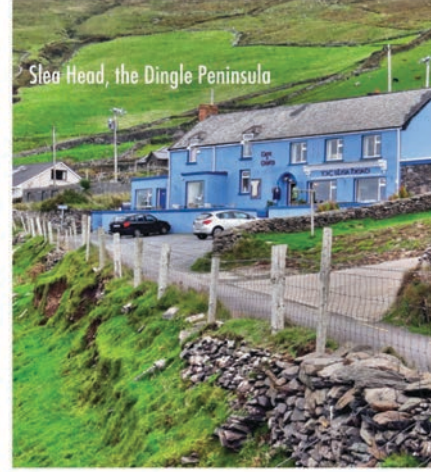
Dingle Brewing Company



Muckross House



Vibrantly colored Kinsale shop

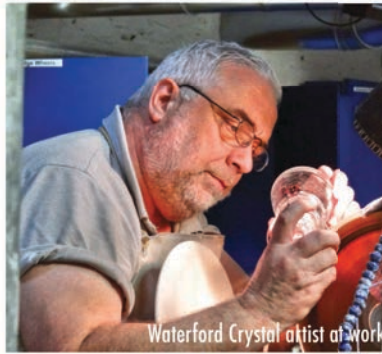


Slea Head, the Dingle Peninsula



Inside Charles Fort

WE CLIP-CLOPPED THROUGH LUSH MEADOWS AND WOODLAND TO THE TRANQUIL RUINS OF 15TH-CENTURY MUCKROSS ABBEY.



Waterford Crystal artist at work



The River Liffey, Dublin



Jaunting car and driver, Killarney



View from Charles Fort



View from a jaunting car, Killarney



Dingle shops and surrounding hillside



Boats bob in Kinsale Harbour



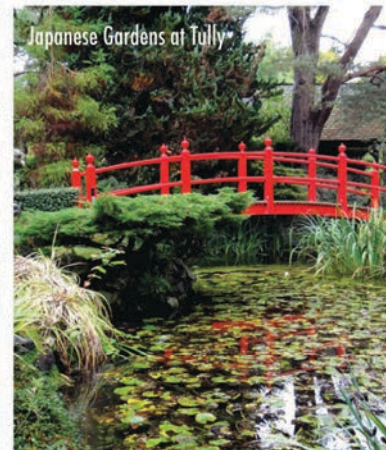
Kinsale Harbour



Shops and pubs line Dingle's streets



Barry gives a tour of Kinsale



Japanese Gardens at Tully