



## **Suggestions for The Accompanying Persons Programme**

### **Ring of Kerry**

The Ring of Kerry showcases the natural beauty of Ireland's land and sea-scapes, combined with centuries of tradition and culture. Often referred to as "the Kingdom" with its spectacular mountains, lakes and valleys sculpting the countryside, such is the beauty of Kerry that painters, sculptors, poets and writers have always felt inspired when visiting.

Above all the Ring of Kerry provides an insight into the ancient Heritage of Ireland – with its Bronze Age Copper Mines, Iron Age Forts, Ogham Stones, Monasteries and a landscape carved out of rock by the ice melting 10,000 years ago. Around the Ring you will pass through and experience numerous Irish villages – some like Sneem with their colourfully painted shop fronts and hanging flower basket displays make for lovely photo backdrops. Stopping for lunch in Waterville, the half way mark on the trip, this is a beautiful town at the end of the Iveragh Peninsula. The town has a very well known golf course and was a favourite holiday spot for Charlie Chaplin and his family. The last part of the drive will bring you back to Killarney through Ireland's first designated National Park of 25,000 acres. There are plenty of photo stop opportunities all around the Ring, but no more so than on this final part of the drive.

### **Dingle and Sleat Head**

Kerry's coastal erosion over millenniums has resulted in some of the most dramatic coastline you are likely to experience. Dingle's beauty has been documented in many films; it is the setting for Ryan's Daughter and, more recently, Far and Away featuring Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman. Part of the "Gaeltacht", Dingle is one of the few Irish speaking areas remaining in Ireland. Upon reaching Dingle there will be time to explore this charming fishing village with its many local craft shops before stopping to enjoy a relaxing lunch.

After lunch, the tour will continue on around to Sleat Head, the most westerly point in Europe. Here we will visit the Blasket Heritage Centre in Dunquin where life on the remote and harsh Blasket Islands will be unveiled. These islands off the west coast of Ireland were finally abandoned in 1953.

### **Gap of Dunloe**

A tour about which words do not do justice – the Gap of Dunloe is truly spectacular! A valley created by glacial movement, the Gap of Dunloe is one of Ireland's most stunning natural attractions and is the pivot for a superb day out. At Kate Kearneys cottage there will be time for quick refreshments before travelling through this magical valley to the lakes by horse and trap. Sitting on the edge of Serpent's Lake is Lord Brandon's Cottage, previously a hunting lodge, and it is here that lunch will be served. After lunch boats will collect people to take them for the scenic and serene journey across the Lakes of Killarney. The boat trip ends at Ross Castle, the 14<sup>th</sup>

century stronghold of the O'Donoghue Family, where there will be some time to wander around before being transferred by coach back to your hotel.

### **Muckross House & Gardens**

The beautiful Victorian House & Gardens of Muckross Estate are nestled in the overall 25,000 acre National Park, although the original estate is made up of 11,000 acres. This is one of Killarney's premier tourist attractions and a tour of the house gives an interesting and real insight into life in the "Big House" as it would have been during Victorian times. The collection of decorative arts is impressive, including some exquisite examples of Killarney Oak Marketry. The Capability Brown style grounds and gardens of Muckross house are home to many species of birds and other wildlife, such as squirrels, foxes, badgers, bats, shrews and voles. It truly is a nature lovers' paradise and visitors are invited to enjoy these grounds in their own time.

**Scenic Lake Tour:** This hour-long cruise is an ideal way to experience the lakes for which Killarney is famous. A comfortable, heated and thoroughly modern vessel departs Ross Castle and ventures out onto Lough Leane. Here you will be surrounded on all sides by the towering MacGillacuddy Reeks. During your cruise your experienced skipper will provide a commentary on the flora, fauna and historical heritage of the surrounding area.

**Killarney Highlights:** This excursion takes you to a combination of the popular sights in Killarney including:

1. Aghadoe- overlooking the famous Lakes of Killarney are the monastery, round tower and ruins of a 12<sup>th</sup> century castle built on this townland.
2. Ross Castle – Built in the 14<sup>th</sup> century by the O'Donoghue Clan this was the last Irish Castle to fall to Cromwellian forces. Guided tours are available.
3. Muckross Traditional Farms: Here visitors get to step back in time and visit three traditional working farms of varying size. Each farm is complete with livestock, poultry and old style machinery etc. Visitors can also take the opportunity to view a labourer's cottage, a carpenter's workshop, a harness maker and a blacksmith's forge. The houses are furnished in the traditional manner, and include such items as the dresser, settlebed and mealbin.
4. Torc Waterfall: This is a sight to behold as the water cascades over the 60ft rock face, it is even more spectacular after heavy rains when the water is gushing down to the falls from the mountains. You can ascend the flight of steps to the top of the falls for a stunning view of Killarney valley and lakes.

### **Shopping and Highlights in Tralee**

Tralee, a booming town with a population of 20,000, is the capital of Kerry. Apart from the many shops and bars that create an atmospheric buzz around the town there are other attractions also. Blennerville Windmill, built in 1800, is the largest working windmill of its kind. During the Great famine (1845-1847) Blennerville was the main port of emigration from County Kerry and there is an emigration exhibition centre to visit while there. Step back in time and take the short steam train journey between the town centre and Blennerville. In addition to the colourful 75 acre Tralee Town Park you will find Pairc an Phiarsaigh, a much smaller tranquil park located close to the town centre. It was named in honour of the memory of Pádraig Pearse, one of the leaders of the fight for Irish Freedom, a poet, barrister and educator.

### **Listowel**

Listowel, famous for hosting a major event in the Irish Horse Racing calendar each September, is a lively market town in an area that has produced an extraordinary number of writers and Seanchai (Story teller). The Kerry Literary & Cultural Centre is located in a 19<sup>th</sup> Century house in the main town square. It is here that you will have

the opportunity to listen to a Seanchai explaining his art form. You can learn more about the great gifts of writers such as John b Keane, Bryan MacMahon and George Fitzmaurice. Also situated off the town square is the 12<sup>th</sup> Centaury Listowel Castle, built by the Anglo-Norman Fitzmaurices.

### **Kenmare**

Cradled in the heart of Kenmare Bay is the picturesque market town of Kenmare. It has made a name for itself in more recent times of being a centre of excellence for gourmet food and superb accommodation. Although originally founded in 1670 and having passed through the hands of many generations, Kenmare town still maintains its quintessentially Irish charm and inherent beauty. Recognised for its historical, cultural and environmental significance the Irish Tourist Board bestowed Kenmare with the title of Kerry's first Heritage Town.