



David McGuffin's
EXPLORING EUROPE

DINGLE TOWN

Daingean Uí Chúis DESTINATION GUIDE



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Introduction

When I think of quintessential Ireland, my mind can't help but wander to the rugged Dingle Peninsula. Here, the local culture and history are deeply rooted in the land, with farming and fishing being a livelihood, not just something dreamed up for the tourist. The peninsula is scattered with ancient Celtic sights, pre-historic ring forts, beehive huts, monastic churches, and endless fields of forty shades of green.

Dingle, the peninsula's most significant town, has about 1,700 residents who work as fishermen, farmers, or in the tourism industry. From Main Street, at the upper end of town, several small streets spill down the hill to the harbor. Each street sports brightly painted businesses, shops, and a multitude of pubs.

The harbor is scattered with twenty or so fishing boats moored to the docks, littered with all the stuff necessary to haul in a day's

catch. Each evening, the boats go out to the sea and return the following day with fresh fish and seafood ready to be served in the local restaurants for lunch and dinner.

Regardless of where you stay in Dingle, you are only a ten-minute walk from the town center. Plan to enjoy an afternoon to roam the craft shops and local stores. Take a walk out to the mouth of the harbor with grand views of Dingle Bay and the adjacent Iveragh Peninsula. Dingle has fine restaurants featuring delicious locally sourced food. Finally, be sure to take advantage of the pubs for a pint and a folk or traditional music session!

Gaeltacht is a word in the Irish language meaning “Irish-speaking region.” The Irish government recognizes these regions where the Irish language is the predominant language, the vernacular spoken at home. Ireland officially recognized these regions in the 1920’s as part of a government policy to restore the Irish language.

Earlier in the 21st century, there was a controversy over the name of this little town in western Ireland. In Irish, it is known as *Daingean Uí Chúis* yet the anglicized version, Dingle, is well known by locals and tourists. Either is acceptable, but most simply refer to it as Dingle.

Historically, most towns and locations in Ireland have Irish and English names. The reason is simple: the British occupied the island from 1542 until 1922. During these centuries, the English tried to impose their customs, cultures, and language on the Irish people.

So, notice the IRISH and ENGLISH names during the next few days. Strike up a conversation in the pub. Enjoy the Irish people and learn about their culture, history, and customs.

Dingle Town is a delightful place to spend an afternoon. Many souvenir shops lining the sidewalks offer typical Ireland memorabilia, but more important are the craft shops, woolen mill outlets, crystal shops, and local merchants offering specialized “Dingle” or “County Kerry” products.

The Harbor area

Many quality shops, pubs, restaurants, and recreational outfitters line the road along the harbor. Along this walk, the Dingle Bay Hotel and Paddy’s Pub offers fine food, trad and folk music, and a warm welcome. Nearby is Out of the Blue, my favorite place for fresh-out-of-the-blue seafood.

Across the street are the docklands and harbor pier. The harbor you see today was constructed in 1992 by pumping sand from the harbor to reclaim land lost to the seas over the past centuries. Take a walk out onto the paved dock

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and look at the workings of fishermen and their boats. Notice how the harbor is secluded from the ocean by a small inlet out to your left. Do you see the lofty mountains in the distance beyond the harbor entrance? These are on the next peninsula to the north, famously known as the “Ring of Kerry” but officially known as the Iveragh Peninsula. Directly across the harbor is a stone tower perched on the hilltop. This structure, known as Eask Tower, was constructed in 1847 and was a project developed to provide work for the Irish during the Great Hunger (famine).

Standing on the dock, turn and face the town. Until 1953, the road along the harbor and the shops beyond were once the loading docks for the narrow-gauge railway running from Dingle to Tralee. To the left, the road following the harbor is known as Strand Street and later turns into “The Mall” as it nears the small bridge crossing the bay.

Dingle Town Stroll

The easiest walk to the top of town follows the route outlined below. It prevents a steep climb up Green Street and presents an orientation to the town.

Beginning at the “old-round-a-bout” near The Kerry Woolen Mills, head up the street known as “the Mall.” A sign pointing to “Conner Pass” and “An Daingean” notes the correct street.

Pass the Police Station on the left (marked by

the two red brick pillars) and a white cross on the right. The white cross memorializes local victims who died in the 1916 Uprising.

Farther along, enjoy the lush gardens on the left, the monastery on the right (denoted by the stone walls and white crosses), and the Guinness distribution center. Just before the “Courthouse Bar,” you find the stone façade of the County Courthouse. Once an enclave for British rule, it is now just a place where the judge drops by once a month to adjudicate simple cases. Next door is the **Courthouse Pub**, where Tommy O’Sullivan holds “court” around 9:30 each evening with a traditional music session.

At the pink **Bridge House**, turn left and cross the small bridge (that’s actually the name it’s known by) and walk up **Main Street**. The white sign states *An Lar*, or town center in Irish, so head in that direction.

Pass the colorful *An Droicead Beag* pub and the green and white **Dingle Pub**. Both pubs offer mostly folk music from afternoon to evening.

Walk slightly uphill through Dingle’s commercial district. You will find hotels, B&Bs, plenty of pubs, a supermarket, hardware stores, specialty shops, and St. James (Anglican) Church along the way.

Turn left at the first street at the top of the hill, Green Street. At the corner, notice **Foxy John's Hardware and Pub**, one of several multipurpose pubs in Dingle.

Walking downhill on **Green Street**, you will encounter local craftsman shops, St. Mary's Church, the town library, boutiques, shoe shops, and **Dick Mack's**, another hardware/pub. At the bottom of Green Street, take a right to visit the harborfront shops and the Dingle Bay Hotel. Taking a left brings you past the supermarkets, **O'Flaherty's Pub**, and back to the "old round-a-bout."

Hike along the harbor

I like to assemble a picnic at one of the supermarkets and take a walk along the harbor.

From the "old-round-a-bout," head east towards Bambury's B&B. Turn right and walk down the road beyond the Skellig Hotel to the Coast Guard station. From there, it is an easy and flat walk through pastures to the mouth of the harbor. The stone tower, built in the 19th century, has no purpose other than looks. The lighthouse and a cliff dropping into the sea are a few minutes beyond the stone tower. Along the way are endless fields of green just begging for a nap or a picnic.



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David's Dingle Town Restaurants

Lord Baker's Restaurant
Out of the Blue The
Boatyard Fenton's
Seafood The Half Door
Land to Sea The Fish
Box



David's Dingle Pubs for Music

The Courthouse - Trad
O'Flaherty's - Trad
Paudie's Bar - Trad and Folk
The Dingle Pub -Folk [An](#)
Droicead Beag - Folk



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