

# Kerry Camino



*Walk in the steps of  
St Brendan, The Navigator*



*St. John's Church, Tralee*



*Day 1 at Tonevane, Tralee*



# Céad míle fáilte and welcome to the Kerry Camino!

Whether you are a first-time visitor or a native exploring the local walking terrain, on behalf of our group I invite you to take time out and enjoy your journey on the Kerry Camino, it is one of the most scenic walks in the world.

Kerry Camino was established in 2012 as a local incentive by our small but dedicated committee to promote walking tourism in the Tralee area and on the existing route known as The Dingle Way.

Our annual 3-day guided walk held over the May Bank Holiday weekend has become a meaningful and social event with many participants returning to walk some or all of the route again. As many as 7500 walk the route annually.

As testament to our continued promotional efforts we in Kerry Camino were particularly pleased to receive a National Pride of Place Award in 2019 in the Community Tourism Initiative category.

Some advice...be prepared for Irish weather changes, wear appropriate clothing/footwear and Leave No Trace. We appreciate feedback from walkers, shared stories and experiences of the route (see contact details on the back page of this booklet.)

I hope you leave with happy memories of your time spent on the Kerry Camino.

Go dté tú slán, safe journey.

Adrienne McLoughlin  
Secretary, Kerry Camino

## Kerry Camino – a recommendation by Kerry Lewis – July 2020

*A good walk can be seen as an adventure, a social outing or indeed a pilgrimage; a pilgrimage as a prayer of the feet undertaken throughout the world from the beginning of time.*

*Walkers share a positive outlook, are sociable and welcoming and always willing to help fellow travellers. A walker gets to commune with nature, has time to reflect and enjoys a sense of achievement.*

*When walkers meet they invariably discuss which walk meant most to them and which one they would repeat. I have walked distance paths in Spain, Italy, France and this year completed Britain's oldest road The Ridgeway. The only path I have repeated (many times) is the Kerry Camino from Tralee to Dingle.*

*It is difficult to describe which of the senses are assailed most when walking the Kerry Camino. It is totally un-commercial, has outstanding seascapes and mountain views and is challenging enough to allow for a sense of achievement. For me it is a pervading sense of fellowship with St. Brendan who more than once walked the way. Feel the aura and sense of his presence at Killelton Oratory.*

*We are just beginning to understand the worldwide importance of St Brendan.*

*Hope to meet you on the Camino!*



# The Kerry Camino



When walking on the Kerry Camino you travel on a journey made not only by Saint Brendan but on a journey made by early pilgrims on their way to Spain via Dingle. We are delighted to have been accepted by the Camino Society of Ireland as one of the Celtic Camino routes. This acknowledges the connections of this route to the English Way on the Camino de Santiago.

In walking this route from St. Johns Church, Castle Street in Tralee to the Church of St. James in Dingle (opposite Benners Hotel,) you can have your Passport stamped at various locations along the route. This walk is accepted as 25km towards the Celtic Camino in Spain, in order to fulfil the requirement of walking 100km to receive your Compostela at Santiago. For more information see: [www.caminosociety.com/ceitic-camino](http://www.caminosociety.com/ceitic-camino)

One may walk the Kerry Camino for a variety of reasons; some may journey it to remember a loved one and some just to enjoy a good walk in the most pleasant of surroundings, with the West Kerry scenery boasting some of the most spectacular in the world.

The people are friendly and the area offers a variety of accommodation to suit all travellers. West Kerry also has many award-winning Irish pubs and restaurants catering for all tastes.

Pilgrims can pick up their passports at the Tourist Office in Tralee or email us at [info@kerrycamino.com](mailto:info@kerrycamino.com) and we can post them out to you. On completing the route you can collect your Certificate of Completion at the Tourist Office in Dingle or in Tralee.

Please check our website [www.kerrycamino.com](http://www.kerrycamino.com) for up to date information on all aspects of your travels.

# DAY 1 - TRALEE TO CAMP

**Distance: 18km | Ascent: 200m | Time: 5 - 6 hours**

The Kerry Camino starts in Tralee at the Church of St. John the Baptist. A sign for the official start can be found at the church entrance. A quick stroll through the park will lead to Princes Street where a left turn continues through Princes Quay and on to a busy roundabout. Turning right here will set the Kerry Camino in motion as the trail quickly escapes the town traffic by joining the gentle curve of the canal path for 2km to Blennerville.

The walk along the canal comes to an end upon reaching a bridge opposite the Blennerville Windmill. At this point, the Kerry Camino branches off from a second trail called the 'North Kerry Way' and crosses the canal to approach the village.



*Derrymore & Tralee Bay*



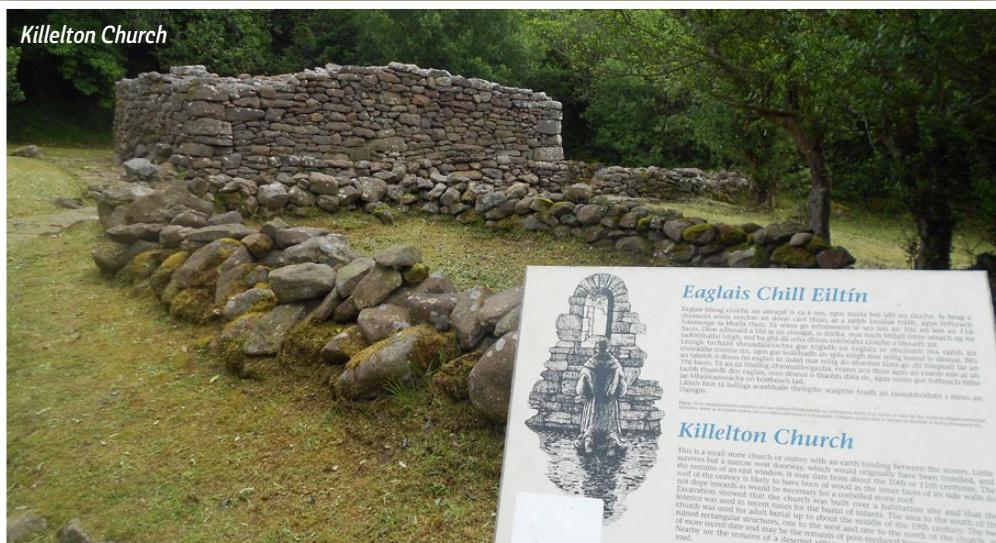
The Kerry Camino follows the main N86 road to Dingle for a short distance when passing through Blennerville. After crossing the canal and bridge, the trail takes the second left turn and follows some quieter country back roads that gradually start to rise up into the flanks of the Slieve Mish mountain range. After around 3km, the trail eventually reaches Tonevane and sharply turns west and out into the open mountainside.

The following section of the Kerry Camino can get quite marshy and is dotted with large red sandstone rocks which have been laid for use as stepping stones. A pair of gaiters is of

great advantage as its almost inevitable that at some point a foot will go astray and end in bog that could be ankle deep.

As the Kerry Camino passes the entrances to several impressive glacial valleys, a number of streams make their way towards the sea. These are easily crossed by either bridge or stepping stones. Features of interest to keep an eye out for along this mountain section are an old Victorian-era reservoir that used to supply water to Tralee. Towards the end of this section the trail descends onto a hedge-lined stone path which used to be the old Tralee-Dingle road in the distant past. The preserved

## Killelton Church



ruins of Killelton Oratory can be found alongside the trail here to the left of the path. This part is often used as a cattle drove which means it can get quite

mucky. Several stiles have to be crossed before finally reaching a tarmac road.

The final section of the walk comes down into a valley, crosses the Finglas River and takes in a short uphill stretch before meeting a minor road. The turn to the right leads downhill for around 1km to Camp Village. The road straight ahead continues in the direction of Dingle. This village is ideal for your first overnight and whether it is simply resting over a pint and sharing the experiences of the day or enjoying some of the local characters and eateries you are sure not to be disappointed.



*The Two Mikes*



*Kerry Camino walkers leaving The Railway Tavern, Camp on Day 2*



*Crossing river Finglas near Camp*

## DAY 2 - CAMP TO ANNASCUAL

**Distance: 17km | Ascent: 270m | Time: 5 - 6 hours**

Leaving Camp Village, the terrain over the next section of the Kerry Camino is a lot more negotiable than the previous stage as it follows minor roads that are so rarely used it would come as a surprise to see a car on one. Re-joining the trail to the west of the Finglas River crossing, the Kerry Camino follows a straight south-westerly direction for 2km, gradually rising out from the valley. Views of Caherconree Mountain (835m) and the impressive premonitory megalithic fort perched close to its top are behind, to the east of the valley, and provide the main focal point of interest.

Small stacks of cut turf dot the landscape as the trail gradually starts to descend towards a small plantation of coniferous trees. This is the



*Kerry Camino - Inch Strand*

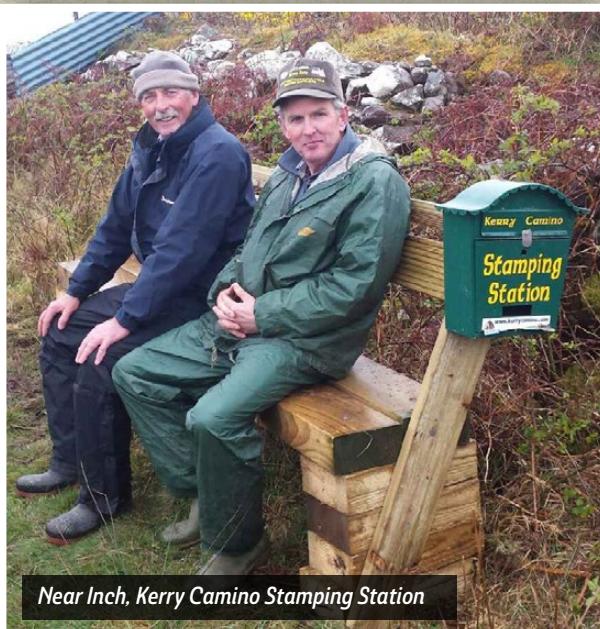
# Kerry Camino



- N86 Road
- - - Dingle Way
- ☀ Viewing Point
- ▲ Mountains
- Rivers

	DISTANCE	ASCENT	TIME
Day 1: Tralee - Camp	18km	200m	5 - 6 hrs
Day 2: Camp - Annascaul	17km	270m	5 - 6 hrs
Day 3: Annascaul - Dingle	22km	270m	5 - 7 hrs





*Near Inch, Kerry Camino Stamping Station*

only sizeable forest on the entire Kerry Camino and continues for 2km before emerging and joining a minor back road heading south. Keep an eye out for cars coming along this road as the noise from the Emlagh River might drown them out. The Kerry Camino briefly follows the course of this road until it crosses the Emlagh River whereupon it exits up a rough track with a short ascent. The trail gradually swings around to the west and reveals a spectacular view of Inch Beach where the continuous

stream of frothing waves come crashing ashore. There is a welcome opportunity to take a break at Inch Beach with a café, shop and a pub nearby serving lunch. This famous setting is where parts of Ryan's Daughter were filmed at the end of the 1960s.

After regaining some strength and starting back on the trail, the Kerry Camino starts to ascend behind a line of houses that face out towards the bay. The walk gradually edges its way inland aiming for Maum at a height of 180m above sea-level. Between Inch and Annascaul the majority of the route is on small roads, with the exception of a small excursion across a field.

Rounding the small summit of Knockafeehane, there is a spectacular view of Lough Annascaul as it rests in the arms of a dramatic

u-shaped glacial valley. In some of the fields in the more immediate foreground, keep a watchful eye for some ancient standing stones. The road stretches out in a perfectly straight line which is very uncharacteristic of the area, with the final 2km bringing the walker into the heart of Annascaul. This village is most famous as the birthplace of Tom Crean the great explorer and his home lies on the site where the South Pole Inn is now located (aptly named). This village has excellent accommodation and

a number of hostelries that will see you fed and watered at the end of your day. The walker will also experience the wonderful culture and heritage that associates itself with this famous west Kerry village. The Kerry Camino reaches a height of 235m as it crosses a saddle between the peaks of Corrin and Knockbrack. The trail then follows an equidistant line between the long mountain ridge of Moanlaur and Knockmore on the left and the main Tralee - Dingle road across the valley to the right.



*Kerry Camino singalong in Annascaul*



*On the road to Inch*



*Meet the locals on the Kerry Camino*

# DAY 3 - ANNASCUAL TO DINGLE

Distance: 22km | Ascent: 340m | Time: 5 - 7 hours



*Taking a break at Minard Castle*

Departing Annascaul, the Kerry Camino briefly joins the busy Tralee-Dingle road before finding a quieter road that twists and turns for a little over 4km before finally descending to sea level beside the magnificent ruin of the 16th century Minard Castle.

This lonely beach makes a great break for enjoying the views across Dingle Bay towards the Iveragh Peninsula.

Leaving the strand, the Dingle Way rises steeply up a narrow path and goes on to follow some classic Irish bothairins (boreens) and minor roads that weave around the surrounding farmland for the next 6km. Walkers should be particularly careful in following the directions from the Ordnance Survey Map along this section as there have been reports of people getting confused with signposts for the Tom Crean Trail.



Before reaching Lispole, an awe-inspiring vista of the mountain range to the north comes into view with Croaghskearda (608m) and An Cnapán Mór (649m) being the more dominant peaks. Having crossed the main N86 road the trail heads north in the direction of Croaghskearda Mountain.

*TobarEoin, Minard*

After following a minor road for around 2km the path cuts across farmland and rises onto the lower mountain slopes. This part of the Kerry Camino lasts for around 5km and can get quite mucky. Walkers would be well-advised to wear a pair of gaiters. Also, expect to be passing farm animals such as sheep and cows.



*Towards Croaghskearda mountain*

A bridge crossing the Garfinny River sees the Kerry Camino re-aligning itself in a south-westerly direction and heading straight for the town of Dingle. The trail traverses the popular motorist drive through Conor



*St. James Church, Dingle*

Pass heading to the north. The Kerry Camino finishes at St. James Church on Main Street. However this final 4km downhill road section will seem to draw out for an eternity for those with tired legs as the town is visible from such a distance.

The wait however is well worth it as you will be entering one of the great towns in West Kerry famous for its dolphin, pubs and restaurants. This will prove a fitting end to what will have been a unique and enjoyable three day experience.

# St. Brendan / Brendan of Clonfert / Brendan the Navigator / Brendan of Ardfert (484 - 557 AD)

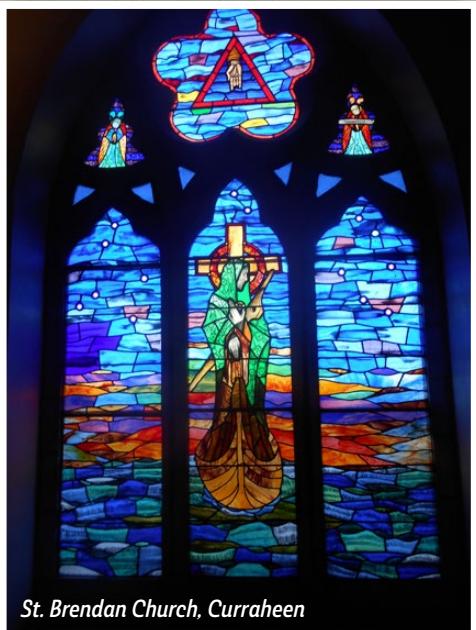
Saint Brendan was one of Ireland's most important saints, many would say that he was the most important. Although Saint Patrick is the patron saint of Ireland many religious scholars believe that it was Saint Brendan who made more of a contribution to the propagation and the spreading of Christianity than any of his contemporaries, including Saint Patrick. He is the patron saint of the Kerry Diocese.

Saint Brendan was born in the County of Kerry near the port of Fenit. It was from here he gazed westward as a young boy and imagined other lands far off in the distance. It was believed by the 'Brendan Scholar,' the late Father Gearoid O'Donoghue, that Brendan saw the migration of birds as a sign that some other lands did exist, lands far off, from where the birds had come in winter and would go to again in the spring.

At the age of twenty-six, Brendan was ordained a priest by Bishop Erc. Between AD 512 and 530, Brendan built monastic cells at Clonfert (one of Ireland's greatest monastic schools) at Ardfert near



St. Brendan Statue, Fenit Pier



*St. Brendan Church, Curraheen*

Tralee, and Shanakeel (SeanaCill,) usually translated as the “Old Church,”) at the foot of Mount Brandon. But it was for his exploratory voyages St. Brendan is most famous for.

In the fifth century Saint Brendan left his Abbey in Ardfert with fourteen fellow monks to follow that journey of the birds which he had watched in his youth. He had a curiosity that had to be satisfied. He also believed he had direction from God to spread the word of Christianity to people he imagined lived in those far off lands. On the Kerry coast, Brendan

built a currach-like boat of hides, tanned in oak bark and softened with butter. He then set up a mast and a sail on that boat. He and his small group of monks fasted for 40 days, and after a prayer on the shore, embarked on his travels.

Brendan’s first voyage took him to the Arran Islands, where he founded a monastery. He also visited Hinba (Argyll,) an island off Scotland where he is said to have met St. Colmcille. On the same voyage he travelled to Wales and finally to Brittany on the northern coast of France.

The story of Brendan’s voyages developed originally by word of mouth. It shares some characteristics with other tales of early Christian stories, and is characterized by much literary license. It refers to hell where “great demons threw down lumps of fiery slag from an island with rivers of gold fire” and also to “great crystal pillars.” Many speculate that these are references to volcanic activity and to icebergs, and sea monsters believed to be whales.

The travels of Saint Brendan were chronicled in *The Navigatio Sancti Brendani Abbatis* (Voyage of Saint

Brendan the Abbot.) These works were written in 900 AD long after Brendan had passed away. With many of the facts of Brendan's journeys coming from the *Navigation*, it has been difficult for scholars to distinguish fact and folklore, but it is widely acknowledged that Brendan probably got to Iceland, Greenland and the coast of America at Newfoundland and Florida. In its day it was a "best seller." The *Navigation* is in the great library in Genoa and it was there that another great explorer, Christopher Columbus, who was a student in Genoa, discovered the manuscript.

Columbus did say on the eve of his epic voyage "I am going to find the holy lands of Saint Brendan." It is widely believed that Saint Brendan set foot in North America one thousand years before Columbus sailed.

In 1978, Tim Severin, the British explorer, recreated Brendan's trip to show it was indeed possible that he had reached America. Severin's trip was the subject of a documentary and a book.

Father Gearoid O'Donoghue of Fenit, worked tirelessly to spread the story of the life of Saint Brendan. He was instrumental, along with a hardworking committee, in the raising of a statue to the memory of this captivating saint. This statue stands looking westward at the end of the port pier in the seaside village of Fenit. The Committee also developed a wonderful tour of the places associated with Saint Brendan. This tour takes one to the places associated with his birth, his baptism, and the Ardfert Abbey at the site of the original abbey which had been built by the saint. It was to this Abbey in Ardfert that students of theology and those interested in pilgrimage came in mediaeval times.

It was from Ardfert in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries that the pilgrims ventured forth to travel on to the busy port of Dingle where they sailed to La Coruna in Spain and onwards to Santiago to the burial place of the relics of Saint James the apostle.

It is this route that commemorates St. Brendan and the many pilgrims that came after him as the "Kerry Camino" today.

# Kerry Camino contact details:

Website: [www.kerrycamino.com](http://www.kerrycamino.com)

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- St. Johns Church, Castle Street, Tralee
- Church of St. James, Dingle

## KINDLY SUPPORTED BY:



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