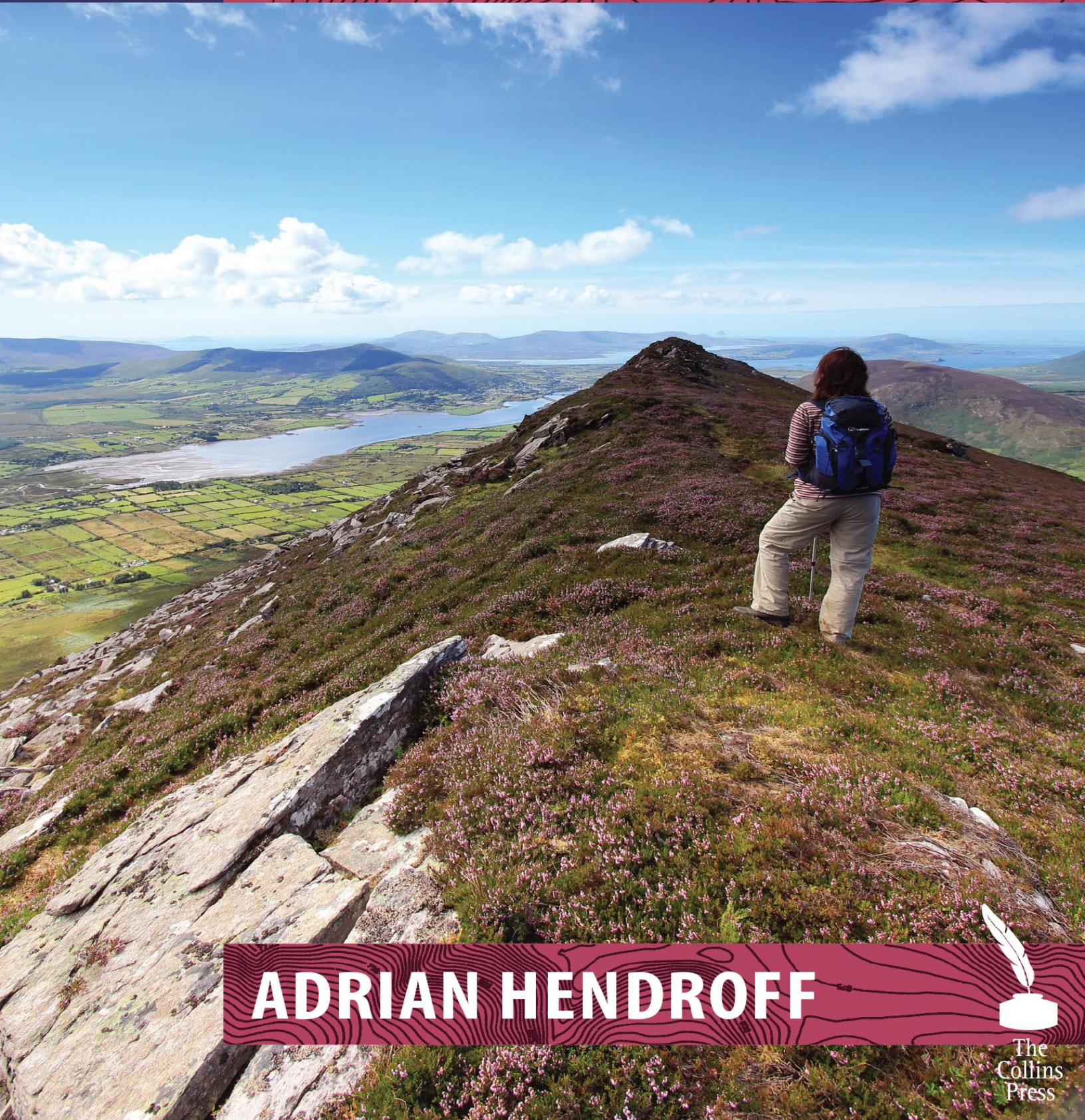




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# KILLARNEY TO VALENTIA ISLAND —THE IVERAGH PENINSULA A WALKING GUIDE



ADRIAN HENDROFF



The  
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**ADRIAN HENDROFF** is a qualified mountain guide and a member of the Outdoor Writers and Photographers Guild. His articles and photographs have been widely published. He has explored the mountains of Scotland, Wales, England, Romania, Iceland, the European Alps and the Dolomites, but he thinks of the Irish mountains as home. His previous books include *From High Places: A Journey Through Ireland's Great Mountains* (2010), *The Dingle, Iveragh & Beara Peninsulas: A Walking Guide* (2011) and *Donegal, Sligo & Leitrim: Mountain & Coastal Hillwalks* (2012).

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*Looking toward Knocknadober from the Beentee ridge.*

## Disclaimer

Hillwalking and mountaineering are risk sports. The author and The Collins Press accept no responsibility for any injury, loss or inconvenience sustained by anyone using this guidebook.

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For those I may have forgotten to mention, please accept my apology in advance, as this is merely an oversight.



*Muckross Lake, with Eagles Nest and Shehy Mountain in the background.*

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# Route Location Map

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# Quick Reference Route Table

No.	Walk Name	Category	Grade	Distance	Ascent	Time	Page
1	Bolus and Ducalla Heads		2	10km	430m	3¼–4 hours	19
	<i>Normal route</i>	Coastal Path and Hillwalk	2/3	21km	530m	6½–8 hours	
	<i>Long variation</i>	Coastal Path and Hillwalk	1	3.5km	100m	1–1½ hours	23
2	Geokaun	Coastal Path	2	6km	260m	2–2½ hours	27
3	Bray Head	Coastal Path	2	10km	380m	3¼–4 hours	31
4	Beentee Loop	Mountain Path and Hillwalk	3	11km	750m	4–5 hours	35
5	Knocknadober from Roads	Hillwalk	3	7km	670m	3–3½ hours	38
6	Knocknadober via Stations of the Cross	Mountain Path and Hillwalk	2/3	26km	400m	7¼–9¼ hours	41
7	Lough Currane Circuit	Mountain Path and Hillwalk	3	13km	600m	4¼–5¼ hours	45
8	Eagles Hill and Mullaghbeg	Hillwalk	3	12.5km	720m	4¼–5¼ hours	49
9	Coomcallee Circuit	Hillwalk	2	6km	20m	1½–2 hours	53
10	Rossbeigh Strand	Coastal Walk	3	13.5km	500m	4¼–5¼ hours	56
11	Seefin Loop	Mountain Path and Hillwalk					60
12	Coomasaharn Horseshoe		4	14km	770m	5–6 hours	

	<i>Normal route</i>	Hillwalk	4	18km	1,060m	6¼– 7¾ hours	
	<i>Extended variation</i>	Hillwalk					64
13	Coomaclarig and Curravaha Horseshoe		4	13.5km	900m	5–6 hours	
	<i>Normal route</i>	Hillwalk	3	10km	640m	3½– 4½ hours	
	<i>Short variation</i>	Hillwalk	3	11km	820m	4–5 hours	68
14	Coomnacronia, Knockmoyle and Knocknagantee	Hillwalk	5	17km	1,200m	7–8½ hours	72
15	The Cloon Horseshoe	Hillwalk	4	11km	830m	4–5 hours	78
16	Gearhameen Circuit	Hillwalk	4	14km	1,050m	5¼– 6½ hours	83
17	Knocklomena–Boughil Ridge	Hillwalk	5	13.5km	1,250m	6–7 hours	87
18	The Coomloughra Horseshoe	Hillwalk	5	12km	1,000m	5–6 hours	91
19	Carrauntoohil via O’Shea’s Gully	Hillwalk					95
20	Coomloughra Lakes via The Hydro Road	Mountain Path and Low-level Hillwalk, optional Scramble	3	9km	400m	3–3¾ hours	
21	The Reeks Ridge						98
	<i>Normal route</i>	Hillwalk and Scramble	5	9km	980m	5–6 hours	
	<i>Cnoc an Chuillin variation</i>	Hillwalk and Scramble	5	12km	1,130m	6–7½ hours	
22	Lough Acoose to Kate Kearney’s Cottage						103
	<i>Normal route</i>	Mountain Path and Hillwalk	2/3	25km	600m	7¼– 9¼ hours	
	<i>Including Brassel Mountain</i>	Mountain Path and Hillwalk	3	27km	1,030m	8¾ – 11¼ hours	

23	Tomies, Shehy and Purple Mountain	Hillwalk	4	18km	820m	6–7½ hours	108
24	Strickeen, The Eastern Reeks and Drishana	Hillwalk	4	16km	810m	5½–6¾ hours	112
25	Torc Mountain	Mountain Path and Hillwalk	2	9km	500m	3–4 hours	115
26	Muckross Lake	Loop Forest and Lake Walk	1	10km	80m	2½–3½ hours	119
27	Old Kenmare Road						123
	<i>Galway's Bridge to Kenmare</i>	Mountain Path	1	10.5km	250m	3–4 hours	
	<i>Torc Waterfall to Kenmare</i>	Mountain Path	2	18.5km	490m	5½–7 hours	
28	Mangerton Mountain and Stoompa						128
	<i>Normal route</i>	Hillwalk	3	9.5km	760m	3¾–4½ hours	
	<i>Stoompa variation</i>	Hillwalk	4	14.5km	960m	5¼–6½ hours	
29	Bennaunmore and Crohane	Hillwalk	4	16km	800m	6–7½ hours	132



*Torc Waterfall*

# Introduction

And there I asked beneath a lonely cloud  
Of strange delight, with one bird singing loud,  
What change you'd wrought in graveyard, rock and sea,  
This new wild paradise to wake for me . . . .  
Yet knew no more than knew those merry sins  
Had built this stack of thigh-bones, jaws and shins.

– **John Millington Synge ('In Kerry')**

Synge calls it a 'wild paradise' and its mountains a 'stack of thigh-bones, jaws and shins'. I couldn't agree more, having enjoyed a decade of exploring the mountains in this irresistible corner of Ireland.

It is astonishing to think that during the Devonian Period, 350 to 410 million years ago, this region was an arid, hot and low-lying alluvial plain. Sediments of substantial thickness were deposited by southward-flowing seasonal rivers. These sedimentary layers formed the distinctive reddish or purplish Old Red Sandstone rock that is common to the region today.

Chaos followed. A mountain-building episode 280 to 340 million years ago resulted in tectonic forces compressing and thrusting up layers of rock in east–west folds. The mountains of Kerry were born during this Hercynian or Variscan orogeny.

The peaks of the Iveragh Peninsula were then of Alpine proportions. However, erosion, hard weathering and glaciations over the past 280 million years have gnawed away at these giant peaks, trimming them to their present size. The hard sandstone cores resisted erosion and their defiance formed the sandstone rock ridges, slabs and ribs that today make up most of the highlands of this peninsula.

Ice then became the master sculptor from about 2 million years ago on more than one occasion. Monstrous tongues of ice pushed their way northwards and north-westwards across these peninsulas carving deep,

steep-sided and lake-filled corries; forming hanging valleys; dragging large boulders and depositing moraine sediments along the valley floors.

We have much for which to thank this epoch of geological landscape building as we walk the rugged peaks, dramatic ridges, captivating valleys and glittering lakes of the Iveragh Peninsula today.

A spine of mountains punches the Iveragh skyline, dominating the view inland from a coastal ring road that weaves its way along the fringes of the peninsula. It is much larger than its two neighbouring peninsulas, Dingle and Beara, which encapsulate it to the north and south respectively. A series of mountains run riot along the length of Iveragh, forming a backbone of approximately 55km (34 miles): from its western tip at Farraniaragh Mountain to a range of hills further inland around the Mangerton massif.

Nine of the ten highest summits in Ireland, all of which are over 914m (3,000ft), sit on the lofty heights of the MacGillycuddy's Reeks. The peninsula also contains a whopping 66 Vandeleur-Lynam summits, all of these over 600m with a 15m prominence: 21 in the Dunkerrons, 4 in Iveragh north-west, 9 in Glenbeigh, 4 in the Purple Mountain range, 8 in the Mangerton range and 20 in the MacGillycuddy's Reeks.

The Kerry Way, one of Ireland's best known long-distance walking trails, starts and ends in Killarney and covers 214km (133 miles) of quiet country roads, ancient field paths, covered woodland, open moorland, scenic hillside and lonely mountain passes. The total ascent over the entire Kerry Way is a staggering 5,310m (17,421ft) and the entire trail takes an estimated nine days to complete.

The Ring of Kerry, a world-famous tourist driving route and now marketed as part of the Wild Atlantic Way, runs for nearly 179km (111 miles) along Iveragh's coastline, covering the towns of Killarney, Killorglin, Glenbeigh, Kells, Cahersiveen, Waterville, Portmagee, Ballinskelligs, Caherdaniel, Sneem and Kenmare. The Skellig Ring drive, also part of the Wild Atlantic Way, has added more distance to the coastal ring road and takes in Valentia Island, Portmagee, St Finian's Bay and Ballinskelligs.

Mountains, walking trails and roads apart, the Iveragh landscape exhibits a raw and stunning beauty, from the hundreds of lakes which fill its secluded corries to the spectacular cliffs that line its coast. There is no better way to explore this beautiful and timeless landscape than on foot.

There is too much to write about the Iveragh Peninsula to pack into an introduction, so allow me to reveal its secrets in a collection of 29 carefully selected walking routes. These range from easy to difficult routes of various grades, and last from a few hours to a full day. The routes are designed to cover the length of the peninsula in a general west-to-east direction and include sections of the Kerry Way, beach strolls, woodland trails, coastal paths, island walks, lake circuits, scenic hill walks, classic mountain circuits and some scrambling opportunities. Route selection has been tailored to be different from previous or existing guidebooks and a range of variations and extensions are also given. All routes have been checked in 2013 and 2014, with access foremost in mind. However, as access may be withdrawn at any time, if you do encounter any problems any of the routes described in this book, please contact the publisher and me so we can address the issue in future editions.

I genuinely hope that this guidebook will lead to many great mountain days of your own in this exhilarating corner of Ireland. For every one walk in this guidebook, I can think of another half-dozen variations – so finishing all the routes it is not necessarily the end of exploration.

The majority of these routes are quiet: for most of the time you will not encounter anyone else. So revel in the freedom of the Iveragh hills, escape from an increasingly rushed and weary world, and enjoy the peace and comfort it brings.