

3.4 Dingle → Dunquin Daingean Uí Chúis → Dún Chaoin

Map panel 3

Distance 20.0 km 12.4 miles

Terrain undulating roads to Ventry, then beach walking; vehicle tracks and boreens across shoulder of Mount Eagle; main road past Slea Head and minor road into Dunquin

Grade minor climb to reach Ventry, some stiff climbing around the shoulder of Mount Eagle, with gentler gradients thereafter (total ascent 370 m)

Food and drink Dingle, Ventry, Dunquin (various)

Side-trips Mount Eagle, Great Blasket Centre (see page 44)

Summary from tranquil Ventry, a fine beach walk leads up to a varied traverse of the shoulder of Mount Eagle, with magnificent views of the dramatic coastline

Daingean Uí Chúis
Dingle

Ventry

Slea Head

Dún Chaoin
Dunquin

6.0/3.7

10.0/6.2

4.0/2.5

- Set out from Dingle's Tourist Information Centre along the roadside footpath and follow it past the marina to a roundabout.
- Turn left along the R559 road, cross the bridge and walk up the road, keeping straight on at the first junction (signed for Ventry/Ceann Trá). About 300 m further on, bear right at a fork and continue west along the minor road through undulating countryside.

Dunmore Head with Coumeenoole Bay in foreground

- Three km after the fork the Way turns off to follow two sides of a triangle to reach Ventry. (If in a hurry, you could save half an hour by staying on the road instead to reach Ventry directly, within 1.4 km: skip the next two bullets.)
- To stay on the Way, turn right at some houses, then left through a gate to follow a cattle-trod boreen – very muddy at first, albeit partly relieved by duckboards.
- As you gain height, look behind for views over Smerwick Harbour. Emerge at the top through a gate, and turn sharp left to descend the minor road for 1.3 km. Turn right at the T-junction to rejoin the road you left.
- Descend past the school for 200 m into Ventry. If you're planning to stay at Dunquin youth hostel, stock up here: Dunquin has no shops.
- Cross the main road (R559) just beyond the Ventry Inn, and follow the waymarker pointing down a narrow path to the beach. Turn right to follow the Way along the beach for the next 2.5 km, its firm sand making excellent walking. (A car park information board covers local sea birds and habitats.) If the small stream is too deep to paddle across, use the bridge near the top of the beach.
- Cross the stream towards the southern end of the beach by way of two narrow bridges. Soon afterwards, look for the waymarker telling you to turn right up a sandy track leading inland from the beach.
- At a T-junction turn left along a tarmac road for about 120 m. Bear right, then bear right again, following the tarmac.
- At the end of the tarmac, bear left down a short boreen in front of a farmhouse. Soon, turn sharp left along a very muddy path between tall hedgerows, narrow and overgrown in places. This rises gently, widens out and swings right to become a farm track that rises to meet the main road (R559).
- ⚠️ • Turn left to walk alongside the road (with care, heavy traffic in season). After 1 km, turn right up a loose-surfaced road that climbs steeply at first, then swings left toward a house. Turn right up a boreen with this house to its left and a stream to its right.



Timber frame of naomhóg, Dingle

- This climb is steep at first, soon reaching a stone wall with gate and metal stile. After the wall, the gradient eases and the route swings left to follow a very fine dry-stone wall. This hillside is exposed, and you'll see various techniques used to stabilise the stones.
- Behind you are fine views over Ventry and Dingle harbours. As you continue westward, you start to see the most southerly outliers of the Blasket Islands, followed by Great Blasket itself.
- After cresting another ridge, you enter a wide valley, with an incredibly dense concentration of archaeological remains – over 500 features including many clocháns.
- Cross the watercourse on stepping stones: walking poles will be useful if it is in spate. The path undulates between stone-walled fields. As you pass above two modern houses, look for an intact clochán nearby.
- The substantial dyke on your left turns hard left; instead, continue on a clear path through low gorse. Further on, the path bends right around the rocky shoulder of Mount Eagle. This section is littered with clocháns in various stages of collapse.
- Another climb, steep at first, ends at a dyke with stile. To continue the Way, cross the stile; to climb Mount Eagle refer to the panel.



Mount Eagle (516m)

Instead of crossing the stile, turn right to follow the line of the dyke uphill (north-east). With the dyke at first on your left, climb steeply over grass, then rocky ground. Further up, the gradient eases, and where the dyke dips briefly, cross it through an obvious gap but keep following its line. It veers north-east and becomes discontinuous, but leads you steadily uphill, climbing steeply. You reach almost level ground, and after the dyke peters out, short painted poles mark the last few hundred metres of very gentle ascent to the summit (with survey cairn). From here, the panorama includes Dingle, the Iveragh peninsula, Blasket Islands, Brandon Mountain and the Slieve Mish Mountains. Retrace your steps to rejoin the Way. Allow 2 to 2½ hours for the walk; total ascent is 360 m.

Clocháns are abundant near Sleá Head



Great Blasket (left), seen from the Way

- Once over the stile, the Way descends steeply, following yellow-topped poles, to meet the R559 slightly north of Sleá Head. Turn right and walk about 150 m to the car park.
- Follow the road north and north-west, directly above Coumeenoole Bay, overlooked by the jagged cliffs of Dunmore Head, the most westerly point of mainland Ireland. In the picnic area, a stone commemorates the 1969 filming of 'Ryan's Daughter'.
- The road leads north, slightly uphill, for over 1 km: look for where the Way turns left to follow a short path that emerges on a minor road.
- Turn right to follow the road past a cemetery, then at the next junction bear left. Soon you pass the access to Dunquin pier.
- Bear left at a fork down a gravel road, past deserted stone cottages to the shingle shore. Cross the stream by the steel bridge.
- Go uphill, passing (or visiting) the Great Blasket Centre: see panel and pages 27-29. You arrive in Dunquin at an intersection beside the youth hostel.



Great Blasket Centre, (Ionad an Bhlascaoid Mhóir), Dunquin

This radical building is a revelation, both of the Blasket heritage and of exciting architecture. A long interior corridor leads to a superb view of the island itself. Imaginative displays include scale models, multilingual film and exhibits about the islanders' lifestyle, literature and diaspora. There is a bookshop, research room and restaurant. It's 'the next best thing to a visit to the island' and will help you understand how untouched islanders' lives were by the 20th century and how free of imported words their language. Open daily from late March to end October 10.00-18.00. In 2016, adult admission cost €4. Tel 00 353 66 915 6444, blascaod@opw.ie.