

### Other walks in and around Bantry

**Bantry history trails:** Two town centre trails are signposted from Bantry Tourist Office by finger-posts. At a number of points along the way there are interpretative boards

providing information about buildings and other historical features of interest.

**The Sheep's Head Way:** This long-distance route passes through Bantry and includes a loop walk on Whiddy Island.

### KEY TO WALKS

- 1 Abbey & Rope Walk Loop
- 2 Béicín Loop
- 3 Knocknaveagh & Vaughan's Pass
- 4 Donemark Loop
- 5 Lady's Well & Airstrip Loop



### Heritage Loop Walks in Bantry

Bantry has a wealth of heritage, natural and built, from sea, woodlands and mountains, to Bantry House, the Kilnaruan Pillar stone and story of Wolfe Tone. The walks featured in this brochure were set up by Bantry Tidy Towns group and aim to take walkers on a tour of many of the heritage points of interests in and around the town. The walks vary from 2.5m to 5km plus, but they can be linked together to form a walk of more than 20km. The walks are complemented by a series of interpretative boards erected by Bantry Development & Tourism Association, Fáilte Ireland and Cork County Council.

### General Information

**Additional way-marked walks within 20km of Bantry**  
Sheeps Head Way and Beara Way are two long-distance trails located in west Cork.

For more details see: [www.sheepsheadway.ie](http://www.sheepsheadway.ie) and [www.bearatourism.com/bearaway.html](http://www.bearatourism.com/bearaway.html)

Clusters of loop walks that link into these two trails and which are located within 20km of Bantry can be found at Drimoleague ([www.drimoleaguewalkway.com](http://www.drimoleaguewalkway.com)), Glengarriff Woods Nature Reserve ([www.glengarriffnaturereserve.ie](http://www.glengarriffnaturereserve.ie)), Gougane Barra Forest Park ([www.coillteoutdoors.ie](http://www.coillteoutdoors.ie)) and Kealkil ([www.carriganass.ie](http://www.carriganass.ie)).

**Website:** for more information on Bantry and all aspects of its heritage, including biodiversity, see [www.visitbantry.ie](http://www.visitbantry.ie)  
**Email:** bantryevents@gmail.com

**Facilities:** Bantry has all the facilities the walker might require, including accommodation, restaurants, cafes and shops to buy relevant maps, guides, books, clothing and provisions. The Bantry Tourist Office is located in the Wolfe Tone Square.

**Toilets:** Public toilets are located at the Tourist Office and at the seaward end of the square near the Garda Station.

**Emergency Numbers:** In any emergency dial 999 or 112.  
Bantry Garda Station 027-20860.

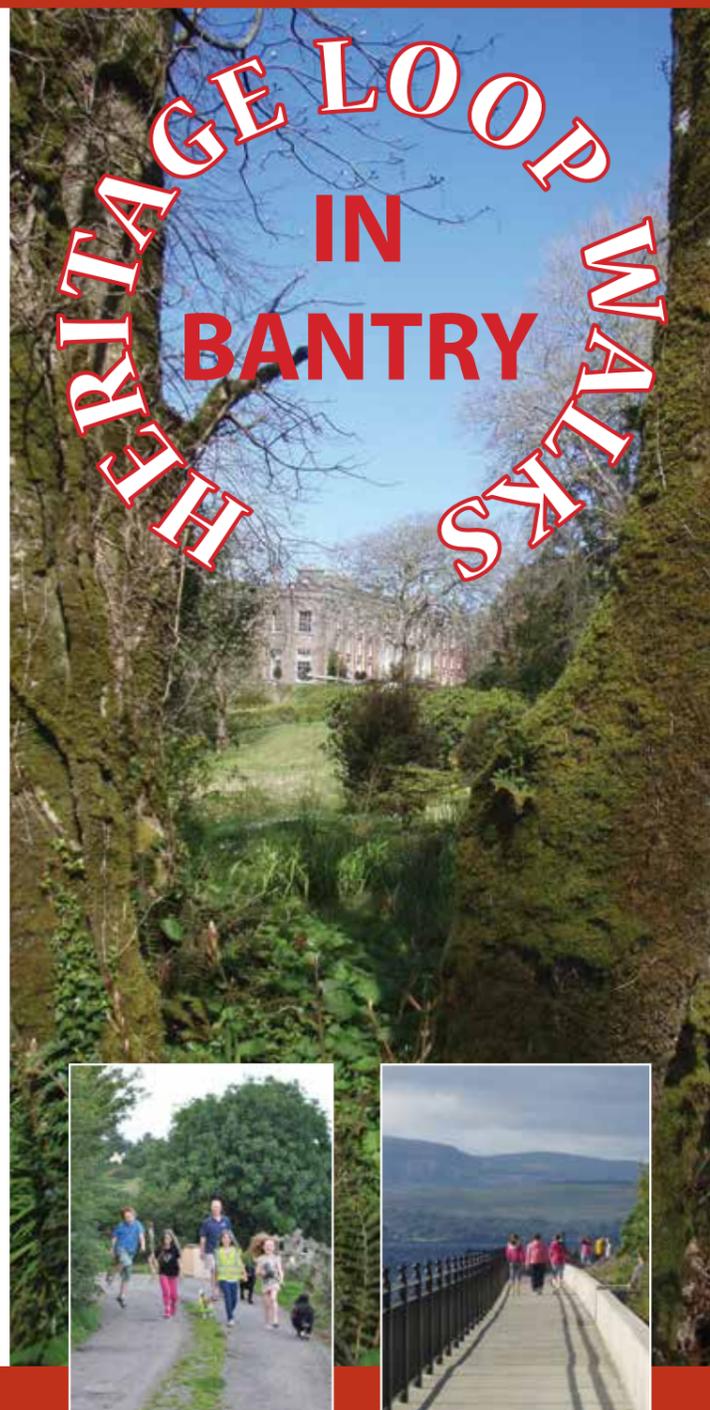
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## 1 Abbey and Rope Walk Loop

**Starting Point:** Tourist Office, Bantry Square

**Distance:** 4km + short trip to Kilnaruane Pillar Stone

**Climb:** 50m **Difficulty:** Easy **Colour Code:** Blue

### Route description

Passing the stone arch entrance to Bantry House on your left, follow the pavement along the south side of the bay. You will soon reach a pier from which a small inshore fishing industry operates and from which the Whiddy Island ferry departs. Nearby is the site of an earlier wooden pier where sailing ships off-loaded their cargoes and so-called 'coffin ships' departed with emigrants destined for America in the 1845-1847 famine. Now the area is home to a pair of otters.

The Abbey graveyard is worth exploring to see the monuments and memorials erected to those who lost their lives at sea and to the victims of the Beelguese disaster of 1979. As is characteristic of many Irish graveyards, upright yew is present. This uniquely Irish variety of yew originated in County Fermanagh.

Cross the road and continue up hill to the Westlodge Hotel. The hotel is so named because it was the site of the western entrance lodge to Bantry House. At the hotel turn left onto a road known as the Rope Walk. Along this road make sure to visit the unique 7th century Kilnaruane Pillar stone (right) which features a very early depiction of a boat.



On reaching town, follow the signs to the Christian Fellowship Church, passing some of the old traditional cottages in the back streets of Bantry and the high stone walls of the Bantry Demesne which in summer are topped with pink and white Valerian. At the Cinemax turn right to reach Bantry square.

**Options:** This loop can be varied at two points.

**Bantry House:** Go up the drive to Bantry House (under the stone archway) and explore the gardens, woodlands and house - tickets and information leaflets are available at reception. Apart from the historical interest of the house and gardens, this is also an important site in terms of biodiversity. The grasslands support one of the richest assemblages of grassland fungi in Ireland and a rare grass, meadow brome. The buildings are home to several species of bat, including Leisler's and lesser horseshoe. To reach the Rope Walk follow the Sheeps' Head Way markers up along a track. Turn left to reach Bantry.

**Westlodge Hotel:** Go through the right hand gate next to the yacht club and follow the track up to the hotel. Little egret can be seen feeding at low tide in the intertidal pond. No dogs are permitted on this route option.



## 2 Béicín Loop

**Starting Point:** Tourist Office, Bantry Square

**Distance:** 2.5km **Climb:** 30m **Difficulty:** Easy

(pavements and paths) **Colour Code:** Purple

### Route description

Pass St Brendan's Church heading towards the sea. The inlet to the left supports large numbers of black-headed gulls and parties of mute swans. In winter, the occasional rare migrant gull is seen e.g. ring-billed gull. The car park on the right was the site of a railway station: from 1881 to 1961, there was a train line from Cork to Bantry. On reaching the old railway pier, imagine the days when passengers, after 1892, could step off the train from Cork and then catch a Bantry Steamship Company boat across the bay to Glengarriff.

Follow the new promenade along the sea front (below), backed by banks of gorse (furze). You might spot a swimming harbour seal: Inner Bantry Bay is one of the most important areas in Ireland for this species. Terns are a common sight, with nearby Horse Island being home to the largest tern colony in County Cork. Bantry is one of the most important mussel growing areas in Europe and in the bay are rows of barrels from which the shellfish are grown.



At the end of the promenade, is a small gravelly bay known as Cove. Go up the road past Reenrour estate and follow the way-markers to Marino Street, originally called the Kerry Coach Road. Turn right after the former Methodist chapel, now a medical centre, pass under the piers of a bridge over which the railway once passed. Go left in front of terraced cottages and you are following the route of the old railway. Emerging behind the fire station, turn left and left again to return to the square.

## 3 Knocknaveagh & Vaughan's Pass

**Starting Point:** Tourist Office, Bantry Square

**Distance:** 5km round trip, plus the option of an additional 5km **Climb:** 170m (or 280m if continuing up Knocknaveagh)

**Difficulty:** Easy (pavements and small roads) to medium **Colour Code:** Orange

### Route description

Cross towards JJ Crowley's pub, go left and then right at the Bank of Ireland. At the post office turn right up the hill and follow the signs for An Cillínach, a childrens' burial ground. At An Cillínach continue up hill, going straight across at a cross roads, before turning left and winding up hill until Vaughan's Pass carpark and viewing point (below) is reached. On a clear day there are exceptional panoramic views over Bantry to Whiddy Island and the mountains of the Beara peninsula.



Retrace your steps back to Bantry or extend the walk by heading off-road (no dogs permitted) following the Sheep's Head Way signs onto the open

heath of Knocknaveagh, a peak of 284m. The walk across the hill to meet a small road on the far side is 2.5km each way. The moorland flowers include the purples of ling, cross-leaved heath, bell heather and the insectivorous species large-flowered butterwort. Bird species such as kestrel, raven and skylark may also be sighted.

**Note:** from the small road on the far side of Knocknaveagh it is possible to return to Bantry on a 7km road-route (care is needed as parts of the road can be busy) by following the Sheep's Head Way markers as far as the Captain O'Neill monument. After viewing the monument return the short distance to the main road and continue on to Bantry.



## 4 Donemark Loop

**Starting Point:** Peace Park

**Distance:** 2.5km **Climb:** 15m

**Difficulty:** Easy **Colour Code:** Green

### Route description

The Peace Park (right) is a small formal garden owned by Cork County Council. In 2010, Sustain West Cork planted apple, plum and cobnuts here to form the nucleus of a new community orchard.

As you follow the pavement heading out of town, look out for the Priest's Leap plaque, which is where a priest's horse reputedly landed having leapt from a pass above Coomhola 16km away. Soon great views over Bantry Bay are revealed to your left. After a while you reach a bridge over the Mealagh River. On the seaward side of the bridge is an old millrace with dramatic falls, especially after heavy rain. This area is Dún na mBarc or 'fort of the ships' where the first people to arrive in Ireland are thought to have landed.

Go right at the bridge and right again to reach a much older stone bridge. On the river here you might spot a kingfisher, dipper or grey wagtail. This river also supports a small population of the rare freshwater pearl mussel, Ireland's longest living animal which can live to over 120 years old. After crossing the bridge continue straight along the small road. This route is part of the original Bantry/Glengarriff road before the new bridge and road was built in the late 1830s. After less than 1km you will rejoin the N71, where you turn left to return to the Peace Park.



## 5 Lady's Well & Airstrip Loop

**Starting Point:** Westlodge Hotel

**Distance:** 5km (Airstrip only, 1km) **Climb:** 50m

**Difficulty:** Easy, good walking boots recommended for off road section **Colour Code:** Red



### Route description

Cross the main road and take the small road sign-posted to Dromcloc. Turn left onto a smaller road and follow the markers across the fields. Along the way there are some fantastic views out across Bantry Bay to the mountains, including Sugar Loaf and Hungry Hill. This route features a religious site known as Lady's Well (left) with a mass rock dating from penal times.

After Lady's Well the route emerges onto a small country road until a T-junction where you go right. This road can be followed all the way back to the Westlodge. Or to reach the shingle shore and airstrip at Beach, turn left after a few hundred metres (signposted Bantry Water Works). The clay cliff, 'Blue Hill', to the left of the beach is part of Bantry's geologically important drumlin swarm, which is a group of low, rounded hills formed by glaciers.

Follow the track between the airstrip and the shingle beach to a gravel beach, where groups of oystercatcher and turnstone can often be seen. A number of cormorant colonies are located on islands in Bantry Bay and these birds are frequently seen diving for fish. At the gravel beach the Airstrip to Abbey option (see below) may be possible, otherwise retrace your steps back along the beach.

**Airstrip to Abbey:** At **LOW TIDE ONLY** it is possible to continue along the stony beach to emerge at the new slipway by the Abbey graveyard, where you turn right to return to the Westlodge Hotel.