**SKELLIG COAST STORY**

At the far west of the Iveragh Peninsula - half way round the famous Ring of Kerry - you feel like you’re standing on the edge of the world.

This Atlantic-facing stretch of Iveragh is known locally as the Skellig Coast – because it keeps offering up sudden views of the two Skelligs Rocks: extraordinary, stark and imposing,. Little Skellig has a colony of 50,000 gannets and 4,000 puffins. The larger - Skellig Michael – is an extraordinary, far-flung place of pilgrimage: one of the wonders of the world.

1300 years ago, early Christian monks built a hermitage at the top of this jagged ocean crag, then at the furthest limits of the known world. Today it has been given UNESCO World Heritage status, and can be reached by the adventurous on a tiny fishing boat, only when the weather allows.

The very place is inspiring and energising. The coastal route – called the Skellig Ring – takes you along perilous roads, wind-buffeted, hugging cliffs above the crashing seas. On the quayside on Valentia Island, waiting for the short ferry crossing to the small town of Cahersiveen, you’ll see 360 degrees of mountain slopes in light and shade – a grand, imposing vista.

There’s history ancient and modern: the Tetrapods – which left the earliest fossil footprints in the world, the birthplace of the Liberator Daniel O’Connell, the site of the first Transatlantic Cable - a 19th century feat equivalent to putting a man on the moon in the 20th, and memories of Charlie Chaplin - who holidayed at Waterville.

You can really get to know people here. There are small family-run businesses, local food producers, artists and craftspeople. Pubs with peat fires and traditional music sessions, artisan chocolate, and some of the best seafood in Ireland.

It’s surprisingly easy to be drawn off-the-beaten track. And literally lose yourself - especially when all the signposts turn to Gaelic, and crossroads appear that aren’t marked on your map.

But if you do get lost – no matter. You’ll want to discover this place for yourself.