**The Ring of Kerry Story**

Out at the very edge of Europe, on South West Ireland’s wild Atlantic seaboard, the Ring of

Kerry circles the Iveragh Peninsula.

The Ring is one of Ireland’s best-known attractions. And with good reason, for it takes

visitors through magnificent natural beauty. But it’s the lovely contrast between the

warmth of the people and the elemental nature of the place that makes it so special, and

worth slowing down to explore.

There’s the human scale of small towns, little villages and *straid bhaile* (tiny settlements)

linked by the Ring, with a long history of welcoming visitors.

Then there’s the scale of nature, across the Ring: at Iveragh’s heart is Ireland’s highest

mountain range and highest peak, *Corrán Tuathail* – part of an ancient glacial landscape that

ranks among the best in Europe. Inland, the Ring crosses Killarney National Park – with

heart-stopping views of lakes and peaks, waterfalls, ancient woods of oak and yew, and

Ireland’s only herd of wild native red deer. Rare white-tailed sea eagles drift overhead. To

the west, seals ‘pup’ in sheltered Kenmare Bay. And on the shores of Valentia Island are the

Tetrapod tracks - the earliest fossil footprints in the world.

Further west still, out to sea, is an extraordinary, far-flung place of pilgrimage: Skellig

Michael – one of the wonders of the world. 1300 years ago, early Christian monks built a

remarkable hermitage at the top of this jagged ocean crag – then at the furthest limits of

the known world. This mysterious and awe-inspiring place – described by George Bernard

Shaw as “part of our dream world” – is now a UNESCO World Heritage site. It can be

reached (for a sometimes life-changing visit) by the adventurous on a small boat, only when

the weather allows.

You can “do the Ring” within a day. But the Ring will truly reveal itself if you take the time

to lose yourself down byways, to stand wind-buffeted on clifftops, to watch the cloudshadows

on distant mountains, to sit by a peat fire in a local pub, to wander on wide sandy

beaches, to stride out on the long-distance Kerry Way, to taste the local soda bread and

fresh seafood, to soak up the traditional music, the ancient history, the stories, the *gaeilge*

... These are the things that make memories.

Iveragh and the Ring have a way of putting things into perspective. Of reminding

us of how small we are … in a good way. Of soothing the mind and touching the soul.

At the Edge of the World.