**West Cork Story**

It’s no wonder they call West Cork “A Place Apart”. Nature sets the pace in this beautiful

south west corner of Ireland – stretching from smart south-coast Kinsale to three rugged

westerly peninsulas reaching into the wild Atlantic: Mizen Head, Sheep’s Head and Beara.

West Cork is the place many Dubliners head for – leaving hurried city lives behind to play

along the long zig-zagging coastline, and walk or ride through peaceful inland woods and

valleys.

Hundreds of inlets, tiny coves, safe harbours and blue-flag beaches are just right for long

active days in the salty air – learning to sail, surfing, diving, whale watching, island-hopping,

bird spotting, kayaking on a salt-water lake in the moonlight, messing about in boats. Or

simply eating a fresh crab sandwich on a quayside.

Thanks to its gentle and generous Nature, this corner has a wonderful food culture. West

Cork’s farmers, award-winning artisan producers and chefs are leading Ireland’s culinary

revolution. From traditional pubs to world-class restaurants, at local farmers’ markets, and

long-established food festivals, you can enjoy great food right across West Cork.

There’s something restorative about the temperate climate and sub-tropical gardens, the

tranquil lanes thick with fuchsia and monbretia, the sudden glimpses of water through the

trees, the shifting light, and the soft greens, greys and violets of bays and distant mountains.

There’s edge-of-the-world drama too: climbing up to a mountain pass through ever-changing

weather, crossing the bridge to the end of Mizen Head with the Atlantic crashing below, or

taking the cable car to Dursey Island - one of over a hundred West Cork islands. Seven of

these are inhabited, including Ireland’s most southerly community on *Oiléan Chléire*(Cape

Clear) “the storytellers’ island”, where Irish is spoken as a first language, and there’s an

independent way of life.

Beyond Cape Clear, the imposing Fastnet Lighthouse stands on a rock known as Ireland’s tear

drop – for emigrants to the new world, this was their last sight of their native land. The whole

coast echoes with history – ancient sites, ruined castles, coastal forts, copper mines. Cork is

proudly ‘the rebel county’ and it was here, at Clonakilty, that Michael Collins – ‘the Big Fella’ –

lived and died.

West Cork is both very Irish, and quite cosmopolitan – for many have ‘blown-in’ on the winds

and stayed to make this beautiful place their home. There’s a strong creative community

here. Arts and crafts, storytelling and traditional music thrive – as do scores of cultural

festivals.

People here value the good things in life. It feels warm-hearted and kind. It’s a place that

takes its time and helps us to slow down … It’s A Place Apart.