

Knightstown Village

Knightstown is a superbly planned village laid out by Alexander Nimmo under the direction of the Knight of Kerry. With a stunning mix of period buildings & houses most notably **The Royal** and the former **Transatlantic Cable Buildings** on the waterfront. Here you can observe **Valentia Island car ferry** making its way back and forth to Reenard.

A stroll around the village is a must, taking in **Altazamuth Walk**, the marina and **RNLI Lifeboat Station**. Knightstown is lucky to boast a couple of **coffee shops**, unique craft shops, a bookshop, **pubs**, along with **beautifully appointed accommodation**. The sensory garden with its fairy residents located on the grounds of **St. John the Baptist Church** is enchanting. Other amenities in Knightstown include a **fantastic playground, tennis court & playing field**.

Driving to the top of the Village take the right turn at the Church.

From the Village take the Old School Road which will lead you up to the **Island Heritage Centre**, housed in the former national school. It is a mine of information relating to the Island. From here you will pass the Light Keepers Dwellings which was home to Lighthouse Keepers and their families for many years.

Crossroads: turning right will bring you down to Glanleam.

Glanleam House, Gardens & Beach can be accessed by taking the first right at the crossroads. Glanleam House was formerly the home of the **Knights of Kerry**, with 40 acres of subtropical gardens dating from the 1830. It is a joy to explore, visit the bamboo gardens, take in the ancient holy well and healing energy spot, include a walk to the lighthouse or possibly stay the night in this historic manor. The small beach is a natural sandy cove which on a clear day would rival any Mediterranean location with lush trees framing the walk down to this little wonder.

Return to the crossroads and turn right.

On your left just beyond the crossroads a ruined church steeple will come into view which is home to the **Island Protestant graveyard**, steeped in history with many of the Knights of Kerry buried here, it is well worth exploring. Just beyond the Protestant Graveyard, also on the left side of the road, is **Kylemore Cemetery**, the Catholic Cemetery on the island.

From there continue up Wood Road. In the spring the mountain is alive with purple mountain laurel, where you can catch a glimpse of the lighthouse & the Atlantic Ocean through the trees. The top of Wood Road opens up to a three way crossroad.

Turning right at the crossroad (sign posted Dohilla) is a must giving you access to Cromwell Point lighthouse & the pre-historic Tetrapod Track way.

Follow the road down to the **Cromwell Point Lighthouse** which dates from 1841. It has been a beacon of safe harbour to many sailors and can be accessed by taking the first right which brings you to the gate of the lighthouse. The lighthouse is now one of the **Great Lighthouses of Ireland**

*Driving back up from the lighthouse take the right at the top of the road, until the pillars of the **Coastguard Radio Station** come into view. A parking area for the **Tetrapod** is located on your right just before the Radio Station entrance.*

The Tetrapod imprints have been dated to Devonian times – somewhere between 350 and 370 million years ago. This site is of international significance as it represents the transition of life from water to land – a momentous turning point in evolution and provides the oldest reliably dated evidence of four legged vertebrates (amphibians) moving over land. Access to the track way is by a pathway down to the rocks.
Note: this is quite steep.

Taking the road back up to the crossroads turn right for the Valentia Island Slate Quarry & Grotto.

The Slate Quarry first opened in 1816 under the direction of the Knight of Kerry and has been a working quarry on and off since that date. Famous for the quality of the slate quarried, this quarry is famous for providing the slate for The Paris Opera House, London's Houses of Parliament and many billiard tables, including one made for the Duke of Wellington & Queen Victoria. Located high above the quarry entrance are statues of Our Lady & Bernadette, placed there during the 1954 Marian Year.

From the Grotto take the road back to the crossroad, here take the road to the right towards Geokaun Mountain & Fogher Cliffs. (Turning right and keeping right heading up the hill).

This road affords you the first glimpse of the **Skelligs**, standing proudly 15 kms off shore. This UNESCO World Heritage Site is accessible via **boat trips** from May to early October (bookings can be made through the Tourist Office).

Continuing along this road will bring to the entrance to Geokaun Mountain.

Geokaun Mountain & Fogher Cliffs - walk or drive to the top of Geokaun Mountain enjoy 360 degree views at the summit, and spectacular sights from the viewing deck at Fogher Cliffs. Learn about the social and cultural history of the island while enjoying the spectacular views. At the peak there are three viewing areas – The Miner's View, The Shepherd's View & Carraig na Circe along with 36 information plaques relating to the views that can be seen from the mountain (i.e. Skelligs, Blasket Islands, Bray Tower), along with the Cable Station, Flora & Fauna, Wildlife and many more.

From Geokaun the next stop will have to be at Valentia Island Candles - nailed to post is a sign that reads "CANDLES - Next Right". Follow the road, even as it narrows to the very end.

Valentia Candles - Located at the end of a windy road you will find a unique Candle Studio where children can make their own candles as a wonderful souvenir of the island and candles may be purchased.

*Making your way back onto the main road (taking the right turn from Valentia Candles) follow the road to the sign for **St. Brendan's Well**.*

According to legend St. Brendan the Navigator baptised islanders at this well on his way from Dingle to St. Finian's Bay. A place of stark beauty & peace – wellington boots may be necessary!

*Back onto the main road continue along approximately 1km will bring you to **Ceol Na Mara** coffee shop – offering not only stunning views of the Skelligs but heavenly home baking.*

You won't find a better location to recharge the batteries before taking on the Bray Head Looped Walk! Park at the foot of **Bray Head Looped Walk**. Hike up to Bray tower, following the signs, taking in the stunning views over to Dingle and The Blaskets. Enjoy the splendid isolation walking along the edge of Europe by the cliffs and sea walk. This looped walk is categorised as moderate and finishes at the car park. It takes approximately 2.5 hours.

*At the base of Bray Head go right to Foilhommerum Bay - The site of the **First Transatlantic Cable** between Europe & North America.*

The memorial at Telegraph Field celebrates two significant events from this location. Firstly, the Transatlantic Telegraph Cable, which was in operation from the island from 1866. The cable was 3074km long and travelled to Heart's Content, Newfoundland. The second being in 1867, beside the Cable Station, the US Coast Guard Survey established Foilhamerum Longitude Observatory. By using a telescope & an astronomical clock, that were connected via the telegraph cable, star passage times were observed for the purpose of calculating the Longitude differences between the Greenwich Meridian and the Harvard College Observatory. This is also the site of the last dancing stage on Valentia Island.

Following the road around will bring you to the bridge crossroads.

Turning right towards the Maurice O'Neill bridge will bring you to the Skellig Experience Centre. (Car park on your right) This bridge allows access to Valentia Island all year round. **Skelligs Experience Centre** - a heritage centre devoted to the UNESCO World Heritage Site where you can experience many aspects of the offshore Skellig Islands while remaining on dry land – it tells the story of the Skellig Rocks from the early Christian monks who called it home, the sea birds that now inhabit the island, through to the building of the lighthouses & the 161 years of service on the island. Boat trips around the Skelligs Rocks may be booked at the centre.

At this end of Valentia Island there is a selection of **accommodation** available ranging from self-catering accommodation to Bed & Breakfasts.

Leaving the Skellig Experience Centre turn left and this brings you back onto the main island road. Follow this road into Chapeltown.

Chapeltown

Home to Valentia's primary school, **Scoil Naomh Dar Earca** along with the **Community Centre & Gym** and **Childcare Centre** which serves the entire island and surrounding areas. The GAA ground, O'Connor Park in Chapeltown, is home to the **Valentia Young Islanders** and has been witness to many fine football games. The Caol River flows peacefully through. A stop at the **Ring Lyne** for a pint or meal and chat is recommended, accommodation is also available here.

At Chapeltown you have a choice:

The Shore Road (turning right at the church) brings you back to Knightstown via the coast.

A delightful drive that comes alive with vivid hues of orange and red in July & August with wild flowers such as Montbretia and Fuchsia.

*The main road (continuing straight) is an alternative route back to Knightstown with the added bonus of passing **Valentia Island Dairy and Ice cream parlour**, home to Valentia Island's famous Ice Cream made on location at the farm.*