



Slí Gaeltacht Mhúscraí

Use our official guide to the *Slí Gaeltacht Mhúscraí* walking route to plan your walking holiday to this hill walker's paradise. This section of the *Beara Breifne Way* takes you through the *Múscraí Gaeltacht* which stretches from *Guagán Barra* to the shoulder of *Mullach an Ois*. This Irish speaking district is famous for its songs and singers, saints and scribes, as well as its rich cultural and archaeological heritage. Both the *Lee* and *Sulán* rivers spring from the surrounding mountains and cascade and meander their way through the valleys until they join forces near *Macroom*.

Along the way

1. Carriganass Castle is the best preserved of the tower houses of the O'Sullivan Beare chieftaincy. It was built in 1540 but surrendered to English forces in 1602. Donal Cam O'Sullivan attacked the English occupied castle with cannon-fire, destroying much of the northern wall. After this, the castle was abandoned. With its spectacular views, perched above the River Owvane, the now ruined castle is a focal point for Kealkil community and has recently been opened to the public.

2. The pass of Keimaneigh is an ice-age meltwater channel. The almost vertical rock walls slice through the Shehy Mountains for over 3 kilometres. The pass was the site of the Battle of Keimaneigh fought between English forces and up to 400 members of the secret agrarian society, the Whiteboys, in 1822. The battle was commemorated in the poem 'Cath Ceim An Fhia' by Máire Bhuí Ní Laoghaire, the popular nineteenth century poet.

3. The mystical Guagán (Gougane) Barra valley is glacial in origin, the still lake lying in a basin gouged out by the ice. As the climate improved and the glacier retreated, ridges of gravel (moraines) were left behind, one of which forms Saint Finbarr's Holy Island. Saint Finbarr, built a monastery here in the sixth century and gave his name to the valley which may mean 'rock cleft of Saint Finbarr'. The island has been a site of pilgrimage for over 1,000 years.



4. One of the first casualties of the epic march of O'Sullivan Beare north to Leitrim in 1602 occurred in the townland of Gortin na Coille. Astonishingly, this detail is recorded in folk memory and locals can still identify the victim's final resting place.

5. Teampailin Eachrois (Augeris Church) was already a ruin when it became the site of the first encampment of O'Sullivan Beare. He and his 1,000 followers camped in the area on New Years Eve 1602. The following morning, not long after leaving the church, O'Sullivan's horse 'An Cearc' (the Hen) broke a leg in nearby boggy ground, which to this day is known as Poll na Circe (Hole of the Hen).



6. Saint Gobnait's Wood in Baile Mhúirne (Ballyvourney), is important because of the old oak it contains. Cited as a good example of native woodland typical of the south west it is designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The wood is also a rich habitat for many other tree varieties; shrubs and herbs in particular. Its sister wood Cascade Wood was also designated following the identification of old woodland and the habitat of protected species; the Kerry Slug and seven species of bat.

7. The only written record of the epic march of 1602 is that of O'Sullivan Beare's nephew, Philip O'Sullivan in his book, The Catholic History of Ireland. In it he records that the chieftain and his followers stopped at St Gobnait's shrine in Baile Mhúirne on New Year's Day 1603. Here they prayed to St Gobnait seeking her guidance for the long journey ahead (of them). St Gobnait's Graveyard, with its holy wells and ruined abbey has for many centuries been a place of pilgrimage and healing. St Gobnait, the patron Saint of bees, built her Abbey here in the 6th century, and some of the features of that early settlement still remain, including her "kitchen" and the abbey ruins with a stone carving of the ill-fated 'gadaí dubh' (black thief) on the internal chancery gable wall and an image of a Sheelagh-na-Gig, a female fertility symbol, carved on an outside wall. A steady stream of pilgrims visit St Gobnait's shrine to do the "rounds" and seek assistance and comfort, especially on her feast day on the 11th of February. The ancient burial ground is the final resting place of thousands of people from Cork and Kerry throughout the centuries, among them the famous composer and musician Seán Ó Riada, and poets Seán Ó Riordáin and Seán Dunne.

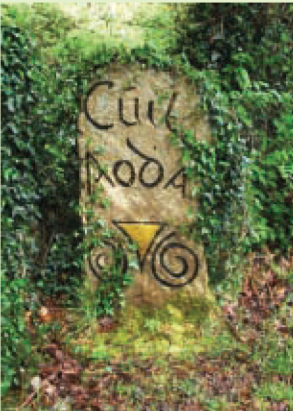
8. Hen harriers are among Ireland's most graceful birds of prey. The male hen harrier is noted for its dramatic courtship displays, known as 'sky dancing'. The birds' most spectacular trait is the 'food pass' from male to female - the male carries the prey in his talons, calls to the female who rises up from the nest and somersaults upside down while he drops the prey for her to catch. An area on the shoulder of Mullaghanish is designated as a Special Area of Protection for the Hen Harrier.

9. As Donal O'Sullivan Beare's followers left Baile Mhúirne (Ballyvourney) they were subject to a 4 hour attack at Ullanes townland by the sons of Thady MacCarthy, former allies, who subsequently declared loyalty to the English forces. O'Sullivan Beare's soldiers managed to repel their attackers, but another faction of MacCarthy's attacked the exhausted and starving convoy as they camped that night.

10. The use of wind farms to convert wind power into a renewable source of energy has become a global phenomenon. While Ireland has the ideal meteorological conditions to benefit from wind power technology, the use of wind turbines remains a controversial subject.

11. Drishane Castle was built in the fifteenth century by the MacCarthys who eventually lost their land, and the castle, to Williamite forces. Drishane Castle was bought by Henry Wallis in 1709, and remained in his family until 1892. Soon after this it became the property of the Dames of Saint Maud, a teaching order of nuns. The castle was temporarily home to Kosovar asylum seekers during the 1990s. It is no longer lived in today.

12. The Blackwater Crossing. On the second day of his march northwards, O'Sullivan Beare was attacked by the MacCarthys who were formerly his allies. Having defended themselves and set up camp, the convoy were further harassed during the night. The Blackwater River crossing was undertaken the following morning in freezing conditions and the marchers were subsequently attacked again. It is believed that many exhausted civilians fell by the wayside and some are thought to have settled in the area.



Tá Baile Mhúirne go fairsing fáilteach ag riar ar tháintibh a ghabhann 'na treo go bhfuil grá ar lasadh i gcoir gach éinne, rug barr ar aon ní dá bhfeaca fús. Bíonn triall na sluaite ar an dTiobrad Naofa, tá le cian i gclú is fé ghradam mbóir agus impím feasta ar Ghobhnait Naofa 'bheith mar dhion' is scáth againn pé áit na ngeobham.

