

# Rooms with the views

The guesthouse experience is the best way to get an authentic look at Kerry life – immersing yourself in the environment while absorbing all the local flavour



**T**HE ACTIVE holidaymaker may be spoilt for choice when it comes to Kerry accommodation – but the smart traveller should opt for a guesthouse that channels tradition, with a twist.

There was a time the idea of a guesthouse sent shivers up the spine – memories of creeping around floor-carpeted establishments in the middle of the night trying to find the only toilet without knocking down the Child of Prague bring people of a certain vintage out in a rash.

No more. Now that we've recalibrated our value metres, holidaymakers, especially the active, champion the allure of the low-key guesthouse. It's an option that has always offered value for money – with the addition of local knowledge and immediate immersion. Meals of folklore and pinotgs served up at breakfast have whetted our appetites, and word-of-mouth endorsements that have helped reinvent this style of stay.

Golfers and walkers alike love **Oteann Fia Country House** (tel: 064-8635000, gleamfia.

**Gorman's Clifftop House** in Glaise Ilbeg, where you can rent an in-house bike to explore the area

**Now that we've recalibrated our values, holidaymakers, especially the active, champion the allure of the guesthouse**

also, a spacious Victorian-style country house set on the outskirts of Killarney town. The River Deanagh runs through its grounds, and one of the simplest of pleasures is to picnic by its bank.

Bean an ti Bridget O'Connell's home-made brown bread, raspberry jam and marmalade are so good that they are pocketed by walkers and picnickers alike, and rooms start at €45. There is also a golf and climb package with three nights' B&B in July and August for €245 per person sharing – including a round of golf at Mahony's Point, one of the three courses at **Killarney Golf and Fishing Club** (which hosts this year's 3 Irish Open), and a guided climb of Carraunmohil, Ireland's highest mountain.

Cyclists should steer a straight line to **Gorman's Clifftop House** (tel: 066-852362, gorman-clifftophouse.com) in Glaise Ilbeg. Two wheels is the very best way to discover the Dingle Peninsula and their in-house mountain bikes are available to hire for €30 per day.

On a bike, you're not just looking at the scenery – you are part of it, says fear an ti, Vincent O Gormain. The couple have several routes mapped out for guests. Beginners can explore the foot of Mount Brandon, where there are archaeological sites aplenty. Kilmalkedar Church dates from the 12th century, while Gallarus Oratory, a stone-built, boat-shaped building, dates from the seventh century. Sleigh Head is a route for more experienced cyclist. The 20-mile route traverses Ballyferrier and Dún Chaoin with its Blasket Islands vista, takes you through Dingle and out the Sleigh Head road back to Gorman's.

Rooms at Gorman's range in price from €55 to €65 B&B per person sharing and feature the work of local potter Louis Mulcahy and tapestry artist Lisebeth Mulcahy.

Gorman's can also organise packages for you at **Dingle Sailing Club**. Kayaking on Dingle Bay through the Dingle Sailing Centre costs €18, with

splash clubs, aimed at getting younger children used to the water, running four mornings a week, at €90. All-day sailing courses for older children, Monday to Friday, cost €280 per week.

Getting wet is part of the adventure. The O Gormains will take your clothes and dry them for you while serving tea by the fire – and hot chocolate for younger visitors.

You can also brush up on your entertainment skills with individual tuition in the tin whistle or bodhran at the **Dingle Music School** (tel: 066-2190438, dinglemusicchool.com). Classes cost €30 per hour. Afterwards, you can join in the lively sessions in some of the bars. Try the Small Bridge, John Benny's by the marina or O'Flaherty's.

**The Moorings** in Portmagee (tel: 066-9477300, moorings.ie) is a guesthouse situated over a traditional bar. Overlooking the harbour, this 16-room establishment offers an adventure boat trip in a rib to explore local inlets, sea cliffs and caves. This excursion, plus two nights' B&B and one evening meal in a deluxe room, is €65 per person sharing. With the help of **Kerry Ocean Adventures**, the guesthouse has a two-night Skellig package which includes B&B, one evening meal plus boat trip and packed lunch, at €210 per person sharing. Tasty extras include Skelligs chocolates and coffee. The package also includes entrance to the Skellig Experience interpretative centre in Valentia.

The Moorings can also organise sea kayaking, walking, photography or surf classes – and, if you tire of the great outdoors, you can take the adventure indoors for the live traditional music held every Tuesday and Friday night downstairs in the Bridge Bar.

If you prefer mountain highs to being on the briny ocean, **Geokaun Mountain and Foghan Cliffs** (geokaunmountain.com) is one of the Ring of Kerry's highest points. On Valentia Island, it



The Moorings in Portmagee, which is situated over a traditional bar