

departures

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TRAVEL SMARTS

The Dingle Peninsula helps set the scene along Ireland's Wild Atlantic Way.

Wild Rovers

NEW SIGNS PROVIDE A CLEARER PATH ALONG IRELAND'S WEST COAST DRIVING ROUTE

Road tripping Ireland's winding, often-confusing roads got a whole lot easier last spring with the launch of the Wild Atlantic Way, a cohesively signed 1,553-mile driving route tracing the length of the west coast. Clear markers guide the way from Donegal's Inishowen Peninsula in the north to the picturesque seaside town of Kinsale, County Cork, in the south, with 160 "Discovery Points" providing information at key spots along the way. The route connects such famous locations as the Cliffs of Moher, the Dingle Peninsula and the Ring of Kerry with a host of lesser-known but equally scenic coastal landscapes and communities. ¶ The journey is a study in contrasts, from remote beaches

on Achill Island in County Mayo to the sheer cliffs at Loop Head in southwestern Clare to the rugged Beara Peninsula in western County Cork. Other highlights include Killary Harbour, a fjord in Connemara, and the big-wave surf of Mullaghmore Head, County Sligo; you can even sign up for boat trips to such islands as the jagged Skelligs, home to rich birdlife and ancient monastic ruins. Along the way, you'll also find evocative castles and abbeys, hiking and biking trails such as the Kerry Way, and, of course, plenty of brightly colored villages and old-fashioned pubs where you can wash down a hearty Irish meal with a refreshing pint at the end of a full day. —ANNIKA S. HIPPLE