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The N22 is the major motorway connecting Cork and Kinsale to County Kerry.The gentle Irish countryside weaves its charms on you and the brilliant greens of the landscape make this an enjoyable drive. Like most European roads, the driver must stay focused to navigate the narrow lanes, twists and turns. An hour out of Cork and you will be in Killarney, a favorite tourist haunt for shopping, tea, spas and nice hotels. An overnight stop at the Killarney Park hotel is a luxurious experience, but becomes more enjoyable after a heart pounding hike at Killarney National Park, and a tour of Muckross House, where Queen Victoria was once a visitor. The docents provide lively anecdotes on the short tour and the gardens are well worth a visit as well. The park itself has many hiking trails to please the rambler as well as the ambitious hiker. The more challenging paths climb uphill to scenic overlooks providing sweeping views as far as the Dingle peninsula on a clear day, but even a pleasant walk around the lake provides tranquility and temporary escape from routine.

A side trip from Killarney to the Dingle Peninsula, one of Irelandâ€™s well-known tourist attractions, highlights the mysticism of the West Coast, particularly on cold and windy days when it is easy to avoid people altogether. A prelude to Dingle is watching â€˜Ryanâ€™s Daughterâ€™, a not too interesting of boredom and infidelity but set against the spectacular backdrop of Dingle, with its desolation and wild beauty.

The rugged coastline at Slea Head, the western tip of Ireland, is the place to understand the meaning of the term â€˜gale force winds,â€™ which are part of the weather pattern of the Irish coast. The endorphins pump though your body as you lean into the winds holding onto hats and children lest they blow off the path. Other more traditional attractions are the unusual pottery workshop of Louis Mulcahy, one of the more renowned potters in Ireland and the Blasket center, which celebrates the Irish language and the unusual, isolated people who once called this home. Families with children will also be drawn to Fungie, the adopted dolphin who has been hanging around Dingle Harbor since 1984.

South of Killarney lie the exclusive resorts and communities of Kenmare, with a high concentration of Irelandâ€™s luxury hotels and spas, as well as some excellent restaurants. Reflective of the affluence that has touched this island over the last decade, world-class spas like Samas at the Park Hotel Kenmare.

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