



The Coomloughra Horse Shoe in the MacGillycuddy's Reeks; surfing on Inch Strand and cycling in the Reeks. Main photograph: Valerie O'Sullivan.

group's fitness, and in all it took seven hours. While it isn't the most strenuous thing you'll ever do – coming down is the hardest part – it certainly requires a good fitness level. There is an alternative, much easier climb which involves hiking only Carrauntoohil.

Some tips: bring lots of snacks – sweets, sandwiches, sports drinks, fruit – my Fitbit had me down as burning over 2,000 calories. Bring plenty of layers, to strip and put on as things get colder on the ascent, and a stick will save your knees on the way down.

Once Ireland's three highest peaks had been ticked off, there was only one way I was going to get all those calories back. The lively town of Killorglin, home to one of Ireland's oldest festivals, Puck Fair, hosts no shortage of pubs. The pick of the bunch is O'Shea's, or Falvey's, where the bar man takes pride in serving a "real pint, not like that sloppy stuff in Dublin. Dripping all over your hand".

You'll wonder have you stumbled into a time warp, there's no fancy decor or layout – just a cosy setting and locals who are mad for a chat and a laugh.

As for food, Sol y Sombra is a tapas restaurant in a former church that serves Spanish favourites made with local artisan produce. Starters and drinks there were followed by dinner at the nearby Bianconi Inn, which has been in Killorglin for 150

years, serving predominantly Irish fare.

By the second morning, sore joints and sore heads needed mending. The folks at the Cappanalea Outdoor Activity Centre told us that early-morning kayaking was the best cure, and while it was hard to fathom when pulling on a wet suit at 9am, once you get out on Caragh Lake it's easy to understand. The fresh air, the splashes of water breaking the total silence, and the views of the rugged mountains and dotted small beaches and coves that surround the glacial lake leave you with a cleared mind. On my first ever attempt at kayaking, unknown to myself I somehow managed to master the zig-zag.

We kayaked right up to Ard na Sidhe, where we had an afternoon tea pitstop, before heading to Inch beach for some surfing lessons with Tim from Kingdom Waves. Don't let the cold Atlantic put you off. Snugly covered neck to toe in wet suit and running in and out of the water, you'll

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be warm in no time. With the sun shining off the salty water, you're taken away by the waves and the moment and time just flies by when you're having fun and the competitive juices are flowing. This endless stretch of golden sand is one of the Reeks District's two Blue Flag beaches and it's remarkably quiet. A hidden gem and the highlight of my visit.

After all that, we head to Jack's Coastguard Restaurant in Cromane – Georgina Campbell Seafood Restaurant of the Year 2018 – which lived up to the hype. The former coastguard station has been converted into a pub/restaurant, with one side of the buildings housing a typical Irish pub for the locals, while on the other side, there's a seafood restaurant with stunning views.

After all that eating and drinking, exercising, and excitement, the perfect way to restore the energy for the trip back was some Lomi Lomi Hawaiian healing by the River Laune at Aloha House. Lomi Lomi is an ancient form of Hawaiian massage, blended with breathing exercises and flowing movements. Coupled with a yoga class, it was the perfect way to loosen out.

It was a hectic trip, and I was snoozing on the flight back to Dublin, already planning my next adventures in the Kingdom.

■ Eamon Donoghue travelled as a guest of Reeks District tourism

Getting there

Aer Lingus Regional flies from Dublin to Kerry and back twice a day.

What to do

Kerry Climbing: A guided Coomloughra Horseshoe climb costs €75 (group rates available). **Cappanalea**

Outdoor Activity Centre: A day's kayaking, canoeing or SUP boarding on Caragh Lake costs €65. **Kingdom**

Waves: Cost of two-hour surfing lesson is €35 adults/€30 kids peak; €30/€25 off peak. Board and wet-suit: €10 for one hour, €15 for two hours.

Where to stay

Ard na Sidhe: B&B doubles from €210 a night/afternoon tea from €25 per person.

Where to eat

Jack's Coastguard Restaurant: Starters from €4.50/mains from €19

Sol y Sombra: Tapas dishes from €7.90. **Bianconi Inn:** Starters from €5/mains from €12. **Carrig Country**

House & Restaurant: Starters from €4.95/mains from €19.50