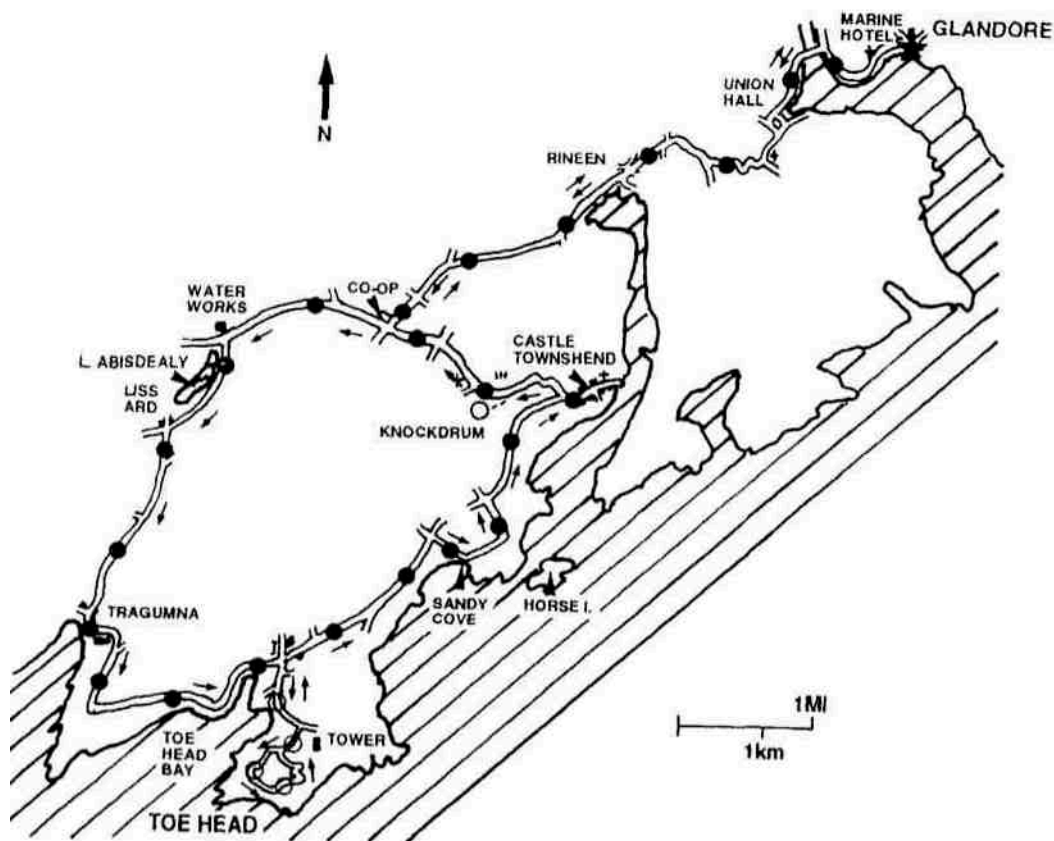


NO. 9. A CYCLING TRIP - TRAGUMNA, TOE HEAD, CASTLETOWNSHEND.



Distance: 32 – 45KM

Time: Say 3 – 5 Hrs

Terrain: Country Roads, with a number of fairly short hills

Start and Finish: At the Marine Hotel.

Comments: This is a lovely cycling trip, particularly on a bright sunny day. Just be sure that you don't take on more than you should

Cycle: Cycle to Union Hall via Poulgorm Bndge, and go up to the Catholic Church, where you keep right, up a winding steep hill, which I personally treated with oisdam and walked up. Keep right at a T-junction at the top - in fact the dotted white lines are a good guide for the time being. Now you have earned a nice freewheel down past Rineen Wood • worth a detour 200m in to the car park for the view out the estuary. Your route continues on a mostly level road, following those dotted lines as far as the crossroads at Castlehaven Coop, where you turn right, towards Skibbereen Stay on this road for over 1MI (twkm), and turn left on the signposted Tragumna road. Lough Abisdealy, a bird sanctuary, is now on the right, and your road is level, along to the unusual lodge of Liss Ard. Go left here and you soon arrive at the pretty Atlantic cove at Tragumna - this, and indeed the road here, are likely to be busy on a summer weekend. You could now just head back the way you came, and perhaps call in to the Liss Ard gardens on the way back - Glandore to Tragumna and back is about 20MI (32km) Otherwise, your onward route is up a short hill past the "Skibbereen Eagle" pub, and now you are into a more isolated headland area, heading for Toe Head. As the road swings left near the sea, there is

a very good view up to the Gortacrossig Lookout Tower on Toe Head, and then your road skirts the back of a nice strand in Toe Head Bay. Just after this, you reach a little crossroads with a sign to the right for Toe Head: this is an optional 3MI (5km) detour around a loop which comes back to here.

Toe Head Detour: There are a few short but steep hills on the detour. Go up right at this crossroads, and stay left at the first fork where a lesser, grassy road goes right. At a T-junction where you can see that Tower looming on the hill ahead, go up right again, and at the next fork, at a house, take the right. This goes round in a loop with marvellous Atlantic views, and brings you back to that fork at the house, from where you retrace your tyre marks back down to the sign post for this detour at the crossroads, where you will now turn right to rejoin the main route.

Onward route: From this crossroads, carry on for about 2MI (3km) towards Castletownshend on a good road, with excellent views to the brooding cliffs of Sandy Cove Bay. Then when you reach a crossroads with a sign "Strand" pointing right, turn right onto the lesser road which brings you to the alluring, sheltered Sandy Cove, where a break or a swim might be in order - you are now 15MI (25km) into the outing, or 18MI (30km) if you took the Toe Head detour. Your onward road rises slightly from the cove, and you go right at the next crossroads to bring you along a very pleasant stretch to a T-junction at the top of Castletownshend village; you might consider leaving the bike at the top when you go down to explore - you'll see why I said this when you see the village street. It is a lovely village, and St Barrahan's (Church of Ireland), the resting place of the famous literary cousins, Somerville and Ross, is well worth a visit. On your way out of the village - now going straight on up at the T-junction at the top - watch for a sign at the crest of the hill for Knockdrum cashel; leave the bike inside the gate and follow the boreen up left some 400m to see this circular structure with a drystone wall up to 3m thick: and on the way back down the boreen, look across over the road to get a fine view of three gaunt, dramatic standing stones of Gurrane's - curiously known locally as the Five Fingers. As you continue your journey down the hill, away from Castletownshend, you pass a Church, and from here the view up to the right to the Gurrane's stones is very clear. Go straight through the next crossroads, and as the road levels out, you arrive back at the Castlehaven Coop crossroads again, where you turn right for Union Hall, and again follow those dotted lines over past Rineen (one last uphill here) and down into Union Hall, and home to Glandore.