

FALL INTO IRELAND

Thrilling music and inspiring literature, stunning landmarks and sheer beauty, iconic events and warm hospitality - these special features of Ireland don't go away at the end of summer! On this island, culture, beauty and adventure are ubiquitous.

Autumn in Ireland is when the summer and fall seasons gently and gradually converge and when bright, warm days linger longer than expected. The nights start to get brisk, but the days surprise you with sunshine and gentle breezes.

Fall is a perfect season to visit Ireland. The crowds are smaller, so it is easy to visit Ireland's star attractions such as the Cliffs of Moher in Co. Clare, Titanic Belfast in Co. Antrim, the Rock of Cashel in Co. Tipperary, Glendalough in Co. Wicklow or Trinity College in Dublin.

Here are some suggestions for having a glorious autumn in Ireland.



SEPTEMBER

Known as the Orchard County, Armagh is a perfect place to experience Ireland's picturesque and fruitful harvest season. The **Armagh Food and Cider Weekend**, September 5-8, is a joyful experience where visitors can sample delicious apples and try freshly made apple cider, while roaming the orchards, talking to artisans, and relaxing in the bucolic and rustic countryside.

The **Westport Festival of Chamber Music**, from September 5-8 in Co. Mayo, is a wonderful boutique festival presenting the finest of chamber musicians from Ireland and around the world. The 2024 performers include Simply Quartet, an innovative string ensemble from Shanghai, and Moynihan, a heralded family trio that opens this year's festival at the famous traditional pub run by Chieftains flutist Matt Molloy.

Looking for love? Check out the **Lisdoonvarna Matchmaking Festival**, from September 1-30. The 165 year old festival is said to be the largest 'singles' event in Europe, full of rapture, romance and plenty of fun. Lisdoonvarna, Co. Clare is just down the road from the Cliffs of Moher, one of Ireland's most stunning natural landmarks.

The **Galway International Oyster and Seafood Festival**, September 27-29, takes place at Nimmo's Pier, Galway City. In addition to fresh oysters and seafood delights, a highlight of the festival is the highly competitive World Oyster Opening Competition, where the best oyster shuckers gather from all over the globe to test their speed, agility and skills to claim the coveted Champion of Shuckers award.

OCTOBER

For a rustic city experience in autumn, head out to **Phoenix Park** in Dublin, one of the largest enclosed city parks in Europe. With walking and riding trails crisscrossing the 1,750 acre park, you're likely to see wild fallow deer roaming the pastures. The park has also a zoo, botanical gardens, playing fields, and acres of trees that are aglow during fall foliage.

The **Belfast International Arts Festival**, from October 16 - November 2, features a variety of music, theater and arts presentations. This year's highlights include Blues & Ballads: An Evening with Paul Jones and Dave Kelly, with Freddie White on October 29, and a theatre and art presentation, the Vanishing Elephant, from October 31 - November 2.

Opera lovers converge at the 74th **Wexford Festival Opera** in Wexford Town, from October 18 - November 2 at the National Opera House, Ireland's first custom-built opera house. In addition to major performances, small operas known as Opera Beag (Pocket Opera), written by the likes of Irish author Colm Tóibín and legendary composer Alfred Cellier, are performed by the world's finest singers and conductors.

The **Guinness Cork Jazz Festival**, from October 24-27, is in its 46th year as one of Europe's coolest jazz festivals, attracting giants of the jazz world and emerging talents from Ireland and beyond. This year's headliner is two-time Grammy winner Gregory Porter, who performs two nights at the Cork Opera House, one of several iconic venues around Cork City taking part in the festival.

NOVEMBER

The **Mayo Dark Sky Festival**, November 1-3, was created in 2016 to celebrate the natural beauty of Mayo and its incredible night skies. With a focus on astronomy, the festival also explores culture, wellbeing and biodiversity with a variety of talks, walks, exhibitions, performances and family friendly events in a warm and welcoming environment. The activities are centered in Newport, Mulranny and Ballycroy.

Launched in 2006, the **Dublin Book Festival**, November 6-10 is a wonderful literary celebration focusing on books published in Ireland, including their authors, editors and contributors. Events take place in bookstores, libraries, cultural institutions and schools throughout Ireland's capital city, while the Printworks at Dublin Castle is the primary hub of the festival, where authors, publishers and audiences mingle together.

November is an ideal time to go **whale watching** in Ireland's southwest, where you are likely to glimpse any variety of humpbacks, minke, orcas and fin whales. The Cork Whale Watch and Whale Watch West Cork are two local companies that provide tour excursions along the beautiful coastline, seeking out whales and dolphins and other amazing wildlife in this amazing habitat.

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