

# Best luxury hotels in Ireland

From the Wild Atlantic Way to the streets of Dublin, Ireland is bedecked with a string of historic hotels, all sparkling with native charm



Lisa Johnson | Friday January 7 2022, 16:54pm

falconry to clay-pigeon shooting, fishing to horse riding, comes more or less as standard as, often, do fine dining and a spa — and in many cases, staff are only too happy to tailor activities and menus to children.

*Main photo: Dromoland Castle, Newmarket-On-Fergus, County Clare*

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Lough Eske Castle

## 1. Lough Eske Castle, Donegal Town, County Donegal

**Best for** lakeside romance

This Elizabethan-style castle hotel is splendidly located on the shores of Lough Eske, with the rugged Blue Stack Mountains as backdrop. Built in 1861, it is now owned by Pat Doherty of Harcourt Developments (the company behind Belfast's Titanic Quarter) and has 97 rooms and suites, as well as a smart contemporary bar adorned with images by the famous Titanic photographer, Father Browne. There's also an AA-Rosette dining room opening on to a parterre, and a Lake Lodge popular with wedding couples. Donegal Town is ten minutes away

**Spa** Y  
**Pool** Y  
**Price** ££

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Ashford Castle

## 2. Ashford Castle, Cong, County Mayo

**Best for** old-school grandeur

The crenellated former home of the Guinness family dates from the 13th century and was lavishly refurbished in 2015 by Red Carnation Hotels: it now has 83 theatrical rooms and suites as well as a billiards room, a red velvet cinema and a Victorian greenhouse-style spa with a pool. It's wonderfully located on Lough Corrib with the wilds of Connemara and the village of Cong (the setting for the 1952 film *The Quiet Man*) on its doorstep; a full menu of outdoor pursuits extends to zip-wiring and boating on the lake.

**Spa** Y  
**Pool** Y  
**Price** £££

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Inis Meáin Restaurant & Suites

## 3. Inis Meáin Restaurant & Suites, Inis Meáin, Aran Islands, County Galway

**Best for** elemental magic

This five-suite retreat run by Ruairi and Marie-Thérèse de Blacem is an ode to the wild beauty of Inishmaan, one of the three Aran Islands off the coast of Galway. The modernist building takes its cue from the island's dry stone walls, and the "elemental" cuisine of native chef Ruairi champions vegetables grown in on-site greenhouses and fish landed that morning. The entire experience is beautifully curated: breakfast is delivered to your suite in a teak box, lunch is a picnic to take on a hike and dinner for 16 people only.

**Spa** N  
**Pool** N  
**Price** £££

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## 4. Gregans Castle Hotel, Ballyvaughan, County Clare

**Best for** access to the Burren and Cliffs of Moher

The neo-gothic façade of this resort hotel is 19th century, but the history of the castle goes back further for nearly 1,000 years, it was home to the O'Brien family, first as Kings of Thomond, then as Barons of Inchiquin. A hotel since 1962, it has retained a warm but stately atmosphere, and offers a range of rooms (from Queen Anne Courtyard rooms to the Brian Boru Suite), dining options (tasting menus to gourmet picnics) and activities (trout fishing to walking history tours). The Cliffs of Moher are an hour away.

**Spa** N  
**Pool** N  
**Price** ££

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Dromoland Castle

## 5. Dromoland Castle, Newmarket-On-Fergus, County Clare

**Best for** history enthusiasts

The neo-gothic façade of this resort hotel is 19th century, but the history of the castle goes back further for nearly 1,000 years, it was home to the O'Brien family, first as Kings of Thomond, then as Barons of Inchiquin. A hotel since 1962, it has retained a warm but stately atmosphere, and offers a range of rooms (from Queen Anne Courtyard rooms to the Brian Boru Suite), dining options (tasting menus to gourmet picnics) and activities (trout fishing to walking history tours). The Cliffs of Moher are an hour away.

**Spa** Y  
**Pool** N  
**Price** ££