

TRAVEL

Ireland's most romantic places to stay

Valentine's Day is approaching and love is in the air — it's time to impress your other half by picking the perfect spot to relax, unwind and make some special memories



A balcony overlooking the lake at Wineport Lodge

Vic O'Sullivan | Sunday January 30 2022, 12:01am GMT, The Sunday Times

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Whether your idea of a romantic getaway is a leafy thatched cottage in the Kingdom, a lighthouse retreat close to the pounding waves on the Wild Atlantic Way's shoreline, or a luxurious castle stay on a rambling estate, there is more than one special destination in Ireland to connect to your other half — or your better self. As Valentine's Day looms and early springtime is in the air, here are the country's most flagrantly romantic places to stay.

Dromoland Castle, Co Clare

If Ireland had a Camelot, it would surely be this castle that first appears beyond a reedy lake around the bend of a narrow lane. With its solid limestone render and large sash windows, the property has all the hallmarks of its neo-gothic architecture, while the decor is restrained elegance without any trace of boom time bling or magnolia lacquer in sight.

With open fireplaces, Tudor arches, timber panelled walls and even a knight's suit of armour on show, Dromoland is unapologetically romantic. The property has casual fare at its country club and a fine-dining restaurant with views over the lake, and the rooms have up-to-the-minute fixtures and are tastefully finished with empire and regency design, but it's the grounds that hold the romantic trump card, which in this case, happens to be all hearts. The 450 acres of wooded land and a hilltop folly with a hawk walker and golf course to hand, along with a pool and gym, mean you never have to leave the estate.

Romantic landmarks Head to Mooghaun Hill Fort, adjoining the Dromoland Estate, for a series of 3,000-year-old stone rings etched into the hillside with panoramic views. The nearby village of Quin has a stunning abbey ruin in a meadow by a stream, the perfect place to pop any question that might be playing on your mind.

Dromoland has a Valentine's Day package for two nights' B&B, with afternoon tea and a falconry or archery or golf activity; from €1,270; dromoland.ie