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# 100 best hotels in Ireland for 2023, from five-star luxury to budget escapes

The Hot 100: Travel editor Pól Ó Conghaile picks the 100 best hotels in Ireland for 2023

Pól Ó Conghaile

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So here it is, my list of the 100 best hotels in Ireland for 2023. Right now, as I see it, and ranked to boot. This is where I duck. The Irish Independent's Hot 100 is not an objective, scientific assessment (I just don't see how that could be done). It is subjective — a guide based on my ongoing travels, taste and experience. It's debatable until the cows come home.

This is the second year of our Hot 100 (read the 2022 list here), and you'll notice some changes. A new Hotel Hall of Fame now retires annual winners into a pantheon that will grow over time. Adare Manor is our inaugural entry. This year's number one will join in 2024.

By my calculations, there are more than 1,000 hotels on the island. I can't revisit them all every year, hard as I try. But this list is a moment to zoom out, to highlight those at the top of their game. It's not beholden to star ratings. It's about hotels I see as best in their class, being the best at what they set out to be. That's why you'll see Ashford Castle, the Limerick Strand and Gougane Barra hotels on the same list. That's why I think it's a truer snapshot of Irish hospitality.

My criteria? I don't have an inspector's checklist. I love hotels that exceed my expectations, that spark good feelings long after I've left. Hotels that are honest, confident and know who their audience is. I like thoughtful design, inspired use of art, food, drink and design, and businesses that go out of their way to engage with their communities and localities.

A good hotel should be a great place to work, as well as visit. And much as I love hotels that find their groove, I also love those that innovate, gently stretching our sense of what stays can be (the best of the best always do a bit of both).

Hotel rates are rising — up 34pc on average compared with 2019, according to the latest Tourism Ireland analysis. But I think my picks offer decent value, whether you spend €100 or €1,000. In a world of global brands, generic stays, crippling costs and staffing challenges, these are distinctly Irish, often independent businesses run by human beings that go the extra mile. They contain multitudes.

Finally, this is a list of hotels, rather than broader places to stay, so I've omitted smaller country houses, campsites and B&Bs (these are included in our Fab 50). I've also left out hotels I haven't been to (yet), or that have undergone significant changes I haven't seen for myself — the Slieve Donard or Dublin's Westin for example. I'm already thinking about next year's list.

## 1. Kelly's Resort Hotel & Spa Rosslare, Co Wexford

An outdoor hot tub at Kelly's Resort  
An outdoor hot tub at Kelly's Resort

On paper, Kelly's is a four-star resort. In real life, it's a feeling. The coastal location, pools, spa and activities befit a cruise ship on land (a sauna with picture window is within steps of the sea); the art and wine a five-star hotel. But it's the personal touch of Bill Kelly, daughter Laura and their team that lifts it off the page. Regulars return year-in and year-out — it's not unusual to see parents and grandparents relaxing in robes as kids dance to Taylor Swift or Hop Little Bunnies, but there are always nooks like Sea Spa or the "snooze room" to escape to. Long-serving staff add to the sense of continuity. Checking in last week, I spotted one waiter that had served me as a child. Rooms are in need of a freshen-up, but I'm assured these are on the way - Kelly's' great trick is to preserve its traditions while always nudging forward. The Sea Rooms is a new glass-box garden restaurant under chef Chris Fullam, for example; the Ivy Room is due a revamp this winter. Before I left, Laura was gliding between breakfast tables and Bill showed me new kitchen gardens and solar panels. Hotels are never finished, I observed; they're more like a

journey. “We learned that a long time ago,” he smiled.

Details: €€€€; kellys.ie

## 2. Armada Hotel

Spanish Point, Co Clare

Armada Spanish Point  
Armada Spanish Point

In a world of rising costs, black swan events, wild weather and staffing challenges, I sometimes feel any hotel making it through the season should get a medal. The Armada not only does that, but seems to get better with each one. Pushing the concept of an Irish coastal hotel, John Burke’s four-star has transformed its bar and Aileen’s restaurant into elegant new cocktail and seafood hubs, incorporated the guesthouse over the road (soon to get a makeover from Home of the Year’s Suzie McAdam) and become Ireland’s first B Corp hotel. B Corp sets a bar for social and environmental performance, and you’ll see that in touches both little (a lobby pantry selling local books and goodies, for example) and big (its own Armada Farm, or wellbeing manager). ‘Life, by the sea’ is the brand, and it resonates from photos of local surfers to a Doonbeg crab starter or in-room seaweed bath. There’s no spa, and it’s worth a call to talk through different rooms and views before you book, but this is fast becoming an Irish classic.

Details: €€€€; armadahotel.com

## 3. Park Hotel

Kenmare, Co Kerry

The Brennan brothers, John and Francis. Photo: Domnick Walsh  
The Brennan brothers, John and Francis. Photo: Domnick Walsh

When news broke that the Brennan Brothers were selling their beloved Park and little sister hotel The Lansdowne, it was one of the day’s most read stories on the Irish Independent website. Both properties will likely remain hotels, but there’s no doubting the sense that the end of an era is nigh; that they have limited time with John and Francis at our service. This Victorian five-star is their flagship, fresh from a revamp by designer Bryan O’Sullivan that overhauled the reception, cocktail bar and ground-floor areas with flair and conviction. Chef James Coffey remains the secret weapon, bringing the right measures of sophistication, tradition and lightness of touch to his menus. Throw in a classy spa, great wellness and activities programme and 25m lap pool, and you’re made. Enjoy the Brennans’ hands-on hospitality while you still can.

Details: €€€€€; parkkenmare.com

## 4. Harvey’s Point

Lough Eske, Co Donegal

Harvey’s Point, Co Donegal  
Harvey’s Point, Co Donegal

There’s a reason this Donegal doozy tops TripAdvisor’s list of the best Irish hotels year in, year out. Actually, there are oodles of reasons. The stunning lakeside setting, the surprisingly big rooms, turf fires, Noel Cunningham’s greetings, the knack it has for Christmas and cabarets... the list is long and lovely. Like Kelly’s, Harvey’s is a distinctly Irish institution, carrying the personable spirit of Deirdre McGlone and Marc Gysling (who sold it in 2019) forward without being afraid to change. There’s no spa — but watch this space. When I asked Cunningham to describe how it feels to stay, he said, “It wraps one in the warm embrace of top-notch hospitality.” Simply put, Harvey’s is like a hug. Read our Harvey’s Point hotel review.

Details: €€€€; harveyspoint.com

## 5. Dunbrody House

Arthurstown, Co Wexford

Dunbrody House  
Dunbrody House

“This summer, Dunbrody guests have been all about the relaxation and the calm working wonders on their stress levels,” says Catherine Dundon. They’re not the only ones. Since the pandemic, this Blue Book bolthole has flipped its business to five nights a week (it closes Mondays and Tuesdays), returning some wellbeing to its owners, too. It’s 26 years since Catherine and celeb chef Kevin first opened, and you’ll find a newly refurbished

house full of snappy Liberty fabrics, Sanderson wallpapers and Carrera marble bathrooms, alongside the spa, cookery school (“guests love being able to sit in on Kevin’s Instagram videos”), elevated gastro-pub fare at The Local and a Cosy Cabin stay in the woods. Creative, confident and I think fairly priced, it’s a modern Irish classic... and yes, calm to boot.

Details: €€€€; [dunbrodyhouse.com](http://dunbrodyhouse.com)

#### 6. Parknasilla Resort & Spa Sneem, Co Kerry

Parknasilla resort  
Parknasilla resort

More than 40pc of Irish visitors to Parknasilla are repeat guests. That doesn’t surprise me. Many would live here if they could (and some even return to the same room). Set on the water, where sea swimmers can enjoy a new vitality pool on the pier, the 500-acre estate is always edging forward. Pygmalion restaurant has been refreshed, with Sarah Walker’s wildflower paintings replacing dark battle scenes and austere lords and ladies, for example, and the 12-hole golf course (always a puzzle, that) has been reconfigured to nine, with a new driving and chipping range. Staff always seem aware of the magical space they maintain, and the fact that it only does winter weddings adds, I think, to the sense of school-holiday idyll. But it’s not all about families — off-season sees some of Parknasilla’s best deals.

Details: €€€€; [parknasillaresort.com](http://parknasillaresort.com)

#### 7. No 1 Pery Square Pery Square, Limerick

The Long Room, One Pery Square  
The Long Room, One Pery Square

It’s hard to believe this was once a hostel. Since Patricia Roberts let her imagination loose in 2006, No 1 Pery Square has become one of Limerick’s best-known addresses, and has set a new tone for Irish townhouses. It’s a small footprint, but never feels squished or stressed — a boutique spa set in the Georgian basement is one example, transporting visitors through moodily lit zones and treatment rooms set in beautiful brickwork bunkers. It’s been redone with earthy tones, local art and natural touches, and other changes see two new high-ceilinged rooms replace the bar in its Georgian wing. Rooms are period or modern, and menus ping with Irish ingredients in Sash or the Long Room — think delicate John Dory, a Rigney’s Farm hot dog or king oyster arancini. Organic wines, a lovely little terrace and urban garden, and service that is never stuffy, complete the picture. When I popped in recently, hot and bothered after a rushed meeting on a warm day, the server smiled: “I’ll be over with some iced water.” Lovely stuff.

Details: €€€; [oneperysquare.com](http://oneperysquare.com)

#### 8. Ashford Castle Cong, Co Mayo

Ashford Castle  
Ashford Castle

A fairytale feel, guest list ranging from Princess Grace to Brad Pitt, and story dating from 1228... it’s tough to fault this fabulous five-star resort. Personally, I find the maximalism a teensy bit full-on at times, but this is “up there with the best hotels globally”, as John O’Ceallaigh put it in our 9/10 review this year and has improved enormously since the Tollman family acquired it in 2013. Coming soon is Éalu (from the Irish for ‘escape’), “a space to relax, rejuvenate and reform” with much-needed 15m pool, gym, fitness studio and therapy room. Experiences like dining in the George V restaurant (“gentlemen require a jacket; a tie is optional”), walking its wolfhounds, falconry and its Guinness Boathouse hideaway are bucket-list stuff in a sublime lakeside location. Oh, and staff are brilliant too.

Details: €€€€€; [ashfordcastle.com](http://ashfordcastle.com)

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9 of the best seaside hotels in Ireland – coastal cool with beaches on the doorstep

Getaways with galleries – 12 Irish hotels with amazing art collections

9. Hotel Doolin  
Doolin, Co Clare

Donal Minihane at Hotel Doolin  
Donal Minihane at Hotel Doolin

It's the little hotel that could. This 17-bed dynamo was Ireland's first certified carbon-neutral hotel, and its brilliant 'why didn't I think of that?' ideas range from a 30-mile menu in Glas to organic wines on tap, an eco-friendly wedding barn, annual arts festival, polytunnel, its own Dooliner beer and attic-style space free to local artists and performers. "It's our personality," says manager Donal Minihane. "It's a village within a village." The magic behind the mash-up style street frontage is set to grow, with a guesthouse and self-catering stays added, though they're keen not to "lose sight of what we are", as Minihane puts it. Expect room and interiors upgrades (necessary, it has to be said) in the coming months, and consider booking for a Monday night, when you'll find its best rates and the Atlantic Sessions under way in Fitz's bar. A trailblazer.

Details: €€; hoteldoolin.ie

10. Ballynahinch Castle  
Connemara, Co Galway

Ballynahinch castle  
Ballynahinch castle

The big news at Ballynahinch this year? Danni Barry's arrival as head chef. Having won a Michelin star at Belfast's Epic, she's now driving this beautiful blend of heritage hotel and Connemara chic to the next foodie level. Overlooking the River Owenmore on a 700-acre estate, Ballynahinch's best bits range from its cosy Fisherman's pub to refurbished rooms, luxe self-catering and Irish art (including Jack B Yeats and Mary Swanzy). You can fish, walk and shoot, but for me the loveliest thing about it is the lounging. The library has been refurbished, and there's a new conservatory and terrace, so there are even more opportunities to sit back and relax. The dining room was already to die for. Now, it has menus to match. Read our Ballynahinch review [here](#).

Details: €€€€; ballynahinch-castle.com

11. The Shelbourne  
Dublin

1824 at The Shelbourne, Dublin  
1824 at The Shelbourne, Dublin

It's hard to say anything new about The Shelbourne, which celebrates its 200th anniversary next year. But it keeps coming up with new things to say about itself. A multi-million euro facelift added a new cocktail bar, boutique terrace and fresh look to a brand as iconic and Irish as Guinness or Aer Lingus (even if, like those, it is no longer Irish-owned). It is seriously expensive and sometimes snooty, but I think still feels accessible to ordinary folk for special occasions like afternoon tea in the Lord Mayor's Lounge, or drinks in 1824, the Horseshoe or No 27. This is Dublin's best hotel and a legend at lunchtime (especially if that lunch involves cured salmon and beef in The Saddle Room). Read our Shelbourne hotel review [here](#).

Details: €€€€€; theshelbourne.com

12. Amber Springs Hotel  
Gorey, Co Wexford

Eibhear Coyle in one of the Amber Springs' family dens  
Eibhear Coyle in one of the Amber Springs' family dens

Ireland's best family hotel? Every family will have its own criteria for that, but I'll bet the Amber Springs will satisfy most. It offers huge rooms (including 65sqm dens with little bunk pods), activities ranging from archery to an indoor playzone, 80-seater cinema, pool and chill-out space for teens, and a central garden that feels like a food court (try the FHB burgers from its own farm). "Kids are our absolute ambassadors," says general manager Eibhear Coyle, a former chef who has taken the generic-looking Celtic Tiger build to a new level. His criteria for testing new ideas? "I think, 'What would my son have done to that?... The chocolate, the Lucozade, the sunscreen!'" Yes, it is relatively expensive, but it believes the value is there (pop in a diary note for its annual January sale), and recently added seaweed baths in the spa, and a Zen sensory room "for families and children on the spectrum". A good hotel never stands still, I always say. You'll have to move fast to keep up with this one.

Details: €€€€; ambersprings.ie

13. The Montenotte

Cork

The Montenotte  
The Montenotte

The Montenotte has momentum. That's hard to achieve, but can bring all sorts of magical energy to a place. Previously a slightly over-hyped hilltop hotel, today guests will find both style and substance. There's a flashy rooftop cocktail bar, decadent little cinema, sunken Victorian gardens and bustling, open-plan restaurant and terrace anchoring it all. Cleverly curated art echoes the independent spirit that sets it apart in the city, and staff go the extra mile (test them with a special request). Next summer, you'll be able to check into new woodland suites described as "cocoons" overlooking the River Lee. There's more work to be done before it hits the play-off positions in the Premier League of urban resorts, but... like I say, it has momentum. Read our Montenotte hotel review [here](#).

Details: €€€€; [themontenottehotel.com](http://themontenottehotel.com)

14. [Dromoland](#) Castle  
Newmarket-on-Fergus, Co Clare

[Dromoland](#) Castle  
[Dromoland](#) Castle

The devil is in the detail at [Dromoland](#). "You can't get away with just being average anymore," as general manager [Mark Nolan](#) observed when I dropped by recently. Not that this iconic stay was ever average. But a multi-million euro revamp is being followed with relentless fine tuning — a new-look spa is a beautifully moody retreat in the vaults, with pressed flowers by the treatment rooms and adult colouring books to go with the Dr Barbara Sturm products, for example; while new boutique Charlotte & Co showcases Irish designers like Aoife, Colin Burke and Tidings. Heck, they've even thought to leave sunscreen by the front door. Its polished service, set-piece rooms, revamped Fig Tree restaurant and golf course add up to a fab five-star deck that is quickly making up ground on Ashford Castle.

Details: €€€€€; [Dromoland.ie](http://Dromoland.ie)

15. Fitzgeralds Woodlands House  
Adare, Co Limerick

Fitzgeralds Woodlands House hotel  
Fitzgeralds Woodlands House hotel

Forty years ago, Mary and Dick Fitzgerald opened a B&B to supplement their farming income. Today, it's home to an ever-changing four-star, the Revas Spa, an organic garden, new playground and award-winning Treehouse outdoor dining area. From weddings to family holidays and spa breaks, staff are all-in on service ("above and beyond" is a term you'll hear a lot), led from the front by Mary, children David, Elaina, Conor and Richard and daughter-in-law Orla. It's a true community hotel, be it sponsoring the Limerick ladies' football and camogie teams, or running Monday-night dancing, and loving every minute of it.

Details: €€€; [woodlands-hotel.ie](http://woodlands-hotel.ie)

16. Ballyfin  
Ballyfin, Co Laois

Ballyfin Hotel  
Ballyfin Hotel

Fred and Kay Krehbiel's flip of Ballyfin from decaying Regency-era mansion (and boarding school) into exquisite country resort deserves a full chapter in any story of Irish hospitality. Those bathtubs... that Gold Room... the library. It's breathtaking stuff, and this year added electric pinoleum (match-stick) blinds and Heveningham furniture to a conservatory restoration. Executive chef Richard Picard-Edwards is new from the Mandarin Oriental Bittescombe Lodge; he describes the eight-acre walled garden as "a chef's dream to draw from". You can even wear one of its period costumes from the Lyric Opera Company in Chicago to dinner (at an extra cost), with a photographer on hand. "Frockage heaven", they call it.

Details: €€€€€; [ballyfin.com](http://ballyfin.com)

17. Monart  
Enniscorthy, Co Wexford

Monart's thermal suite  
Monart's thermal suite

When I think of Monart, I think of... not thinking. Guests leave real life at the gate, destressing as they glide up that glass corridor into a world of white robes. It's an adult-only destination spa that books out well in advance (though it's worth checking for cancellations); a brand that feels far older than its 18 years. Mary Reynolds' garden designs have matured beautifully, the thermal suite and treatments are second to none, and updates include a classy garden lounge and solar farm — with revamps of two suites in the original house next on the slate. Aside from the odd polished tree trunk or woodland decal, the detailing is divine, blending indoors and out in an oasis beloved of repeat guests. "We're at a place now where we're on first-name terms with many," general manager Mark Brown says. Lucky them!

Details: €€€€€; [monart.ie](http://monart.ie)

18. Glasson Lakehouse  
Glasson, Co Westmeath

Glasson Lakehouse  
Glasson Lakehouse

Forget Center Parcs. The Press-Up Group's revamp of a tiring midlands golf retreat tore up the rule book for four-star resorts in Ireland. Elements familiar to The Dean and other brands are present and correct — from the Munchies minibars to the staged, shebeen-style Irish pub — but the outdoor hot tubs, dog-friendly rooms, food trailers, Power gym, Brooks & Co spa and outdoor pool have created all kinds of new pathways for hospitality. Fun and funky, it works as well for girly getaways as family weekends, and chef Dee Adamson was a super hire to head up Bonnie's. Tantalising new cabin stays and the addition of a Stella Cinema continue to be delayed, however. Read our Glasson Lakehouse review [here](#).

Details: €€€€; [glassonlakehouse.ie](http://glassonlakehouse.ie)

19. Cashel Palace  
Cashel, Co Tipperary

The gym at the Cashel Palace Hotel  
The gym at the Cashel Palace Hotel

Just over a year since it reopened following a deep reboot by the Magnier family of Coolmore Stud, Cashel Palace is slowly but surely advancing toward the top table of Irish hotels. New spaces and staff have settled in, international guests are growing and new ventures include its taking stewardship of the Fethard Horse Country Experience. I think the Bishop's Buttery could win a Michelin star in future, Mikey Ryan's is a tasty gastro pub right outside, and the head-turning pool and local touches like Ponaire coffee and Tipperary goodies in the in-room pantry drawer are highlights. Guests can also access a private pathway leading to the Rock of Cashel — or relax and view it from the gardens. There isn't another town hotel like it. Read our Cashel Palace review [here](#).

Details: €€€€€; [cashelpalacehotel.ie](http://cashelpalacehotel.ie)

20. The Regency  
Belfast [new entry]

The Regency  
The Regency

Notions of what exactly a hotel can be are morphing and metamorphosing in our hybrid era, and here's a delicious example. Two restored Georgian townhouses in Belfast's Queen's Quarter are home to several ultra-luxe "residences" complete with 24/7-style butler service and a parlour full of drinks and nibbles. Think ultra-luxe aparthotel meets townhouse stay, with self-catering suites full of heritage tones, salvaged furniture, vinyl baskets and hi-tech kitchens. Next year will see a wellness suite, smaller room types and a new food offering added (there's no restaurant on site), so I expect it to climb this list. You'll pay handsomely to stay, but will be living in the best of the 19th and 21st centuries simultaneously — a balance very few places I've seen pull off to this degree,