

Chillout zones

If you're after super-luxe spas, cookery schools and swanky bars, head to these hotspots for indulgent end of year catch-ups with family and friends

GLASSON LAKEHOUSE

The town of Athlone has never been more alluring for a getaway now that the Press Up hospitality group has rejuvenated Glasson Lakehouse. It's set on the shores of Lough Ree, and there's something for everyone, from teeing off at the golf course and taking to the lake for kayaking or paddleboarding to the serene surrounds of the Brooks & Co spa. The restaurant Bonnie's offers a chic dinner setting, complemented by pints and traditional food at Tom's Fish & Tackle bar. Rooms run the gamut from lake-view luxury to family suites, plus one-bedroom outdoor cabins. The hotel is dog-friendly too. B&B doubles from €209pn.

Killinure, Glasson, Co Westmeath
(glassonlakehouse.ie)

INTERCONTINENTAL DUBLIN

Timeless and elegant, at Dublin's five-star urban resort on Simmonscourt Road in Ballsbridge you can expect a stunning festive foyer each winter. In December the pastry chef Orna Larkin's champagne afternoon tea, €85pp, is served daily in the lobby lounge, while the chef Alberto Rossi's winter menu and accompanying wine list is ideal for sparkling celebrations. For a low-key winter overnight stay or daycation, retire to the spa and heated indoor pool for ultimate relaxation and a choice of treatments – particularly the hot-stone massage and Harvest Mood facial, from €140 to €160 per person. B&B doubles from €320pn.

Simmonscourt Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4 (intercontinentaldublin.ie)

HARD ROCK HOTEL

Rock on into Dublin's premium music-imbued abode, colourfully decorated and filled with dedications to Irish and international musicians, including outfits, instruments and memorabilia. There's a soundtrack to suit

every rock vibe with the in-room playlists, and you can even choose an electric guitar to be delivered to your digs, to jam to your heart's content. Bedrooms range from luxuriously styled superior rooms right up to the penthouse rock star suite, which has a private terrace, barbecue and lounge. Located near Dublin City Hall, don't miss the Zampas restaurant for its take on Peruvian dishes. B&B doubles from €215pn.

18 Exchange Street Upper, Dublin 2
(hardrockhotels.com/dublin)

THE DEVLIN

Neat, petite and set on Ranelagh's main street, the Devlin may be a boutique bolt hole with 40 cosy rooms but it's big on top-to-bottom detail, from a rooftop restaurant, with its vista of the Dublin mountains, to a subterranean cinema. The hotel's Wrapped Up package, from €149pp B&B, is perfect for the chilly season, kicking off with cocktails at the Americana bar, then a three-course dinner at Layla's Rooftop Bar & Restaurant, followed by a late-night film with popcorn at the underground Stella cinema. In the morning enjoy a slap-up breakfast. B&B doubles from €170pn.

117-119 Ranelagh Road, Dublin 6
(thedevlin.ie)

THE CLUB AT GOFFS

Kick back in Kildare at the Club at Goffs, which aside from being set in the heart of thoroughbred county offers Michelin-quality dining at the restaurant overseen by the celebrated chef Derry Clarke. It's located outside the town of Naas, and the setting offers country club comfort, while there are bountiful options nearby to bulk out a winter break itinerary, from walks and trails to the 240-acre Abbeyfield Farm. Or try your hand at firing an air rifle or some archery. Visit the Irish National Stud and

Gardens, drop into Newbridge Silverware and peruse the boutiques at Kildare Village shopping centre. B&B doubles from €170pn.

Kill, Co Kildare (clubhotel.ie)

THE RABBIT HOTEL & RETREAT

The Rabbit is the laid-back sister property of the Galgorm hotel and spa. This Templepatrick retreat, 20 minutes' drive from Belfast and ten minutes from Belfast airport, offers a Getaway B&B package from £285 a room, which includes spa access, a private duo clay ritual and a three-course dinner at the Rabbit Restaurant. Choose between Scandi-style snugs, light and airy Comfy rooms (some with outdoor tubs), an XL-sized attic suite or lake and garden-view luxe rooms. Keep an eye out for the hotel's Santa Sundays during the festive period. Pooches are welcome too. B&B doubles from €195pn.

882 Antrim Road, Templepatrick, Ballyclare (rabbithotel.com)

MONART

The first word in destination spa retreats in Ireland. For a pampering getaway with a difference Monart offers an ultimate adults-only oasis for rest and rejuvenation. Nestled in more than 100 acres of countryside in Co Wexford, the property has 68 deluxe bedrooms with lake or woodland views plus two luxury suites in the 18th-century manor house. And it offers one of the most comprehensive and contemporary thermal suites in the land. Venture through each of the nine rooms – from sauna to salt grotto – or prepare to be spoilt for choice by the goodies on offer in the 15 treatment rooms. B&B doubles from €358pn.

The Still, Enniscorthy, Co Wexford
(monart.ie)



THE LEINSTER

In the centre of Georgian Dublin between galleries, studios and museums lies the Leinster. New to the market this November with an old-world charm, it is where to see and be seen this winter, especially with a martini in hand at the destination bar, which offers a dash of the Roaring Twenties. With 55 rooms and suites, the aesthetic throughout the hotel is timeless elegance, inspired by Merrion Square's Georgian heritage, while the menu at the Collins Club traverses the globe. B&B doubles from €309pn.
Merrion Square, Lower Mount Street, Dublin 2 (theleinster.ie)

DUNBRODY HOUSE HOTEL

Culinary adventurers and groups of foodies should consider decamping to Dunbrody House, set in 300 acres of parkland on Wexford's Hook Peninsula, for a winter catch-up. Combine an overnight package with a class at the cookery school, run by the celebrity chef Kevin Dundon, or savour a long, lavish dinner with friends feasting on a menu devout to local, seasonal flavours. For New Year's Eve, dust off the feathers and fedoras for the most lavish prohibition party, kicking off with cocktails followed by a vintage gala dinner and dancing. B&B doubles from €125pn.
Arthurstown, Co Wexford (dunbrodyhouse.com)

MACNEAN HOUSE

Neven Maguire needs no introduction, but it's a tight-knit team effort at MacNean House in Blacklion, where the celebrity chef and his wife, Amelda, offer an unrivalled and boutique culinary experience. From the famous nine-course tasting menu to the private Chef's Table for groups of 10-20 guests, as well as half-day, hands-on but relaxed courses at the cookery school, food lovers are spoilt for choice. Rooms are available in the house, while a three-bedroom townhouse sleeping five is ideal for groups or families. Don't miss the famous MacNean porridge! B&B doubles from €150pn.
Blacklion, Co Cavan (nevenmaguire.com)



BARRY MURPHY





Right: the InterContinental Dublin is known for its Christmas decorations.
Below: the bridal suite at Glasson Lakehouse

