



GREETINGS

NEWPORT MANSIONS

The Christmas season always makes us nostalgic, and why not! It reconnects us with cherished traditions of family and community that are dear to us. It encourages us to celebrate and give to others. It reminds us that being healthy, happy and loved is the true Christmas miracle in our lives.

Our winter issue of *Travel & Culture* presents a selection of cultural events and holiday celebrations to put you in the holiday spirit, from tree lightings and parades to ice skating, caroling and local food markets.

We're especially keen on live music and theater in New England, which evoke childhood memories while eliciting new cultural discoveries. Our calendars on pages 8 and 10 offer perennially favorite holiday performances, from the *Messiah* and *Nutcracker* to jazzy *Charlie Brown's Christmas* and the whimsical musical, *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*. There are Irish and Celtic Christmas shows galore, from brilliant performers Paul Byrom, Chloë Agnew, the Irish Tenors and Celtic Woman to celebrated performers such as Séamus Egan, Lúnasa, Eileen Ivers and more.

For Christmas gifts, these gift shops on page 22 may have just what you need, and check out our book reviews of new books on page 35 for the book lovers in your life.

Whether you are leaving home or heading home during the holidays, remember to

open your eyes to new horizons and to appreciate the breadth and beauty of the world. We've focused on three special destinations in New England we enjoy visiting in winter: Quincy, Newport and the Merrimack Valley. Each of them offer distinctive hospitality to travelers, and what they share in common is an abundance of culture, cuisine, history and natural beauty.

See our winter calendar on pages 20-21 for winter festivals, culinary events, live music, dance and theater leading up to and beyond the St. Patrick's Day season in New England.

If you are planning to visit Ireland in the coming months, we can think of myriad reasons to go, from the Christmas markets and TradFest coming up, to the promise of spring. We have discovered that between March and June, the milder weather, smaller crowds and relaxed vibe makes spring a perfect time to visit Ireland.

If you haven't experienced St. Patrick's Day in Ireland, 2025 may be your bucket list year. Dublin's parade and festival week is definitely worthwhile, and so too are smaller festivities in Armagh, Sligo, Galway and other Irish towns. In April, celebrations of Easter across the island evoke a spiritual and cultural buoyancy well worth experiencing. Then in May, Ireland's calendar of music and cultural festivals begin to emerge, with intimate gatherings from Clare to every where.

We love the Aer Lingus service from Boston to Dublin and Shannon throughout the year, now made easier than ever thanks to TSA PreCheck and U.S. Preclearance. An added bonus is the easy access Aer Lingus offers from Ireland to the rest of Europe. For travelers looking to join a group tour, look no further than Brack Tours and Cara Group Travel, which have exciting itineraries ready for 2025.

In preparing this issue, we find ourselves nostalgic for another reason: the 25th anniversary of Boston Irish Tourism Association. We launched BITA in 2000 as a year-round niche cultural tourism initiative with two goals in mind. One, celebrating New England's grass roots cultural heritage groups and small businesses, especially festivals, parades, concerts and literary activities. Two, strengthening travel ties between New England and Ireland. Read our story about BITA'S quarter century milestone on pp 36-37.

For now, enjoy Christmas and Happy New Year to all.

Polette and Michael Quinlin
Boston Irish Tourism Association

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