

# SPRINGTIME IN IRELAND

Of course we love summer in Ireland, and autumn leading into the Christmas holidays and winter. But increasingly, springtime in Ireland is the sweet spot for more and more Americans, who have discovered the milder weather, the abundance of nature, smaller crowds and in general a chill vibe between March and June which fits their desires. Plus, airline flights, lodging, car rentals and culinary experiences are markedly less pricy during spring, perhaps allowing for a longer visit.

With so much freedom what do you do next! Definitely check out the iconic landmarks, but spring is also a good time to explore hidden gems:

For a taste of Ireland, visit Shed Distillery in Drumshanbo, Co. Leitrim, where you can take a distillery tour then explore the shores of Lake Allen on electric bikes.

Ireland's love of nature and science comes together at Birr Castle, Co. Offaly, which boast some of the world's largest 19th century telescopes, plus acres of formal gardens, ancient wood paths and a grand castle to explore.

The Saltee Islands in Co. Wexford is the most famous bird sanctuary in Ireland and popular with day trippers and veteran birdwatchers.

The Donkey Sanctuary at Knockardbane Farm in Liscarroll Co. Cork offers an inspiring and tranquil setting for these beasts of burden so often underappreciated.

Seabird Sanctuary on Rathlin Island, Co. Antrim is a joy for birdwatchers, history buffs and anyone looking for an insight into island life.

Florence Court Estate & Gardens in Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh, is an elegant 18th century mansion with sweeping vistas of Fermanagh. Its historic walled garden is home to 180 heritage trees.

Enjoy a Sheep Dog demonstration at the Feeney Farm in Streedagh, Co. Sligo, nestled beneath iconic Benbulbin Mountain. With 1,700 sheep and lambs in peak season, there's plenty of work for these frisky sheepdogs!

For an ecotourism adventure, take the Dolphins and Nature Boat Trip from Carrigaholt, Loop Head Peninsula in Co. Clare, home to Europe's largest group of resident bottlenose dolphins.



## CALENDAR HIGHLIGHTS

### March

Springtime kicks off in grand style with St. Patrick's Day celebrations to honor Ireland's patron saint. Dublin's St. Patrick's Day Parade and Festival on March 17 is a sight to behold, but you'll equally enjoy parades and festivities in Sligo, Galway, Armagh and many smaller towns.

### April

Easter Week, April 13-21, is a religious and cultural celebration, a time for local communities to gather around shared values and beliefs. Cork, Limerick, and Waterford have traditional religious processions, performances of sacred music, and community-based events.

Foodies, head to the West Waterford Festival of Food in Dungarvin, Co. Waterford, April 25-27, showcasing the best in local produce and artisan foods.

### May

Ireland's national celebration of the arts and creativity is called Bealtaine, (May Day). This month long festival throughout Ireland features performances, exhibitions, discussions, workshops and readings by artists working in various art forms.

Fleadh Nua in Ennis, Co. Clare, May 25-June 2, is a vibrant and dynamic traditional music feast of concerts, céilís, sessions, recitals, sean-nós dancing, and lively street performances.