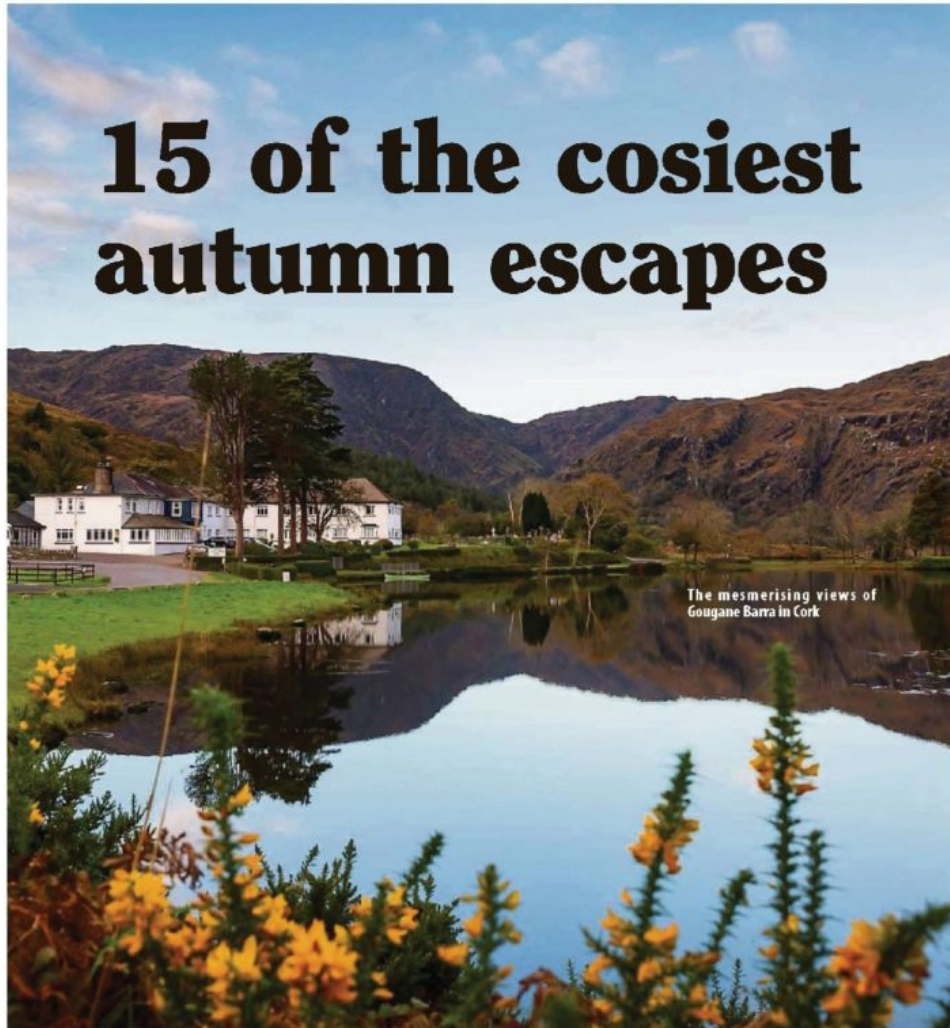


# 15 of the cosiest autumn escapes



The mesmerising views of Gougane Barra in Cork

**As the leaves turn golden and the chill creeps in, book a break in a calm and comfy country hideaway, writes Georgina Campbell**

**A**UTUMN is a lovely time to escape in Ireland for a cosy seasonal break with good food, crackling fires and easy outdoor pursuits like woodland walks and foraging. Wrap up, slow down and dig in!

**1. Roundwood House, Laois**

Secluded in mature woodland at the foot of the Slieve Bloom mountains, Frank and Rosemarie Kennan restored this early Georgian property over a quarter of a century ago. Their daughter Hannah and her husband Paddy Flynn now run it with warmth. You'll need only a sense of history and an appreciation of genuine hospitality for a happy stay here, so relax and enjoy the grounds and the nearby hills, good home cooking and the company of other like-minded guests basking in the brilliant surroundings. Don't allow yourself to miss Frank's Library: "A History of the Evolution of Civilisation", it is a simply wonderful space.

**Where:** Roundwood House, Mountrath, Co Laois; [roundwoodhouse.com](http://roundwoodhouse.com)  
**What:** Midweek Special 2 B&B+1D c.€250pps.

**2. Gougane Barra Hotel, Cork**

Set in a Forest Park overlooking peaceful Gougane Barra Lake, famous for its monastic settlements, the Lucey family's delightfully old-fashioned hotel has been a restful base for walking holidays since as far back as 1887. It's currently in the energetic and enthusiastic hands of Neil Lucey along with his wife Katy, who is a chef, and they love upgrading the property while respecting its special timeless qualities. It's still the perfect spot to unwind outdoors, but it's now also a food destination – and Katy's delicious meals



Left: Roundwood House in Co Laois. Right: Renvyle Beach by Renvyle House Hotel and Resort.





The library of Adare Manor is an ideal spot for a hot whiskey and a good book.

are just the ticket after a bracing walk. **Where:** Gougane Barra Hotel, Macroom, Cork; gouganebarra.com **What:** Autumn offers include 2 nights B&B+1D from €210pp.

### 3. Renvyle House Hotel & Resort, Galway

Once home to a Gaelic chieftain and Oliver St John Gogarty, among others, the Coyle family's remote and beautifully located house has a romantic and fascinating history and uniquely quirky charm — along with a well-deserved reputation for outstanding hospitality and great local food. A wonderfully away-from-it-all place, with all of Connemara on the doorstep, its on-site attractions include golf and hot tubs on the Atlantic and there are indoor treats too, tucked cosily into the bar beside the fire perhaps. Just the spot for that autumn break.

**Where:** Renvyle House Hotel, Connemara, Co Galway; renvyle.com **What:** Autumn in Connemara September Specials, including 2B&B+1D from c.€299pp.

### 4. Sheen Falls Lodge, Kerry

This famously stylish, yet relaxed, waterside hotel just across the river from Kenmare town is very lovely in autumn. There are plenty of outdoor activities in the area (with guides available), but it can be hard to beat meandering quietly along the riverbank and enjoying the wildlife on the 300-acre estate. Rooms offer traditional luxury with a modern lightness of touch — and dinner in The Falls restaurant, overlooking the tumbling water, is always a treat.

**Where:** Sheen Falls Lodge, Kenmare, Co Kerry; sheenfallslodge.ie **What:** Brooks include Sheen Magic 3-night package with afternoon tea, dining at The Falls Restaurant and €50 spa credit, from c.€904pp.

### 5. Clanard Court Hotel, Kildare

How many places welcome guests with the sight of alpacas grazing happily in grassy enclosures? The Byrne family's purpose-built hotel is a place that tries harder, with constant improvements, very comfortable rooms, ideas to keep things fresh through the seasons and lovely staff, who take pride looking after everyone. All this plus a spa, e-chargers, bikes for guests, good food and good value, it's the real deal — and, less than an hour from Dublin, this south Kildare destination is handy for a break.

**Where:** Clanard Court Hotel, Dublin Rd, Athy Co Kildare; clanardcourt.ie **What:** Autumn Straight Ahead, 1 and 2 night packages from €196 for two.

### 6. Mount Juliet Estate, Kilkenny

Kilkenny's distinctively lush beauty lies in its rivers and woodlands — and there's no better time than autumn to visit Mount Juliet. While perhaps best known for golf, the many activities to be enjoyed on the 500-acre estate beside the River Nore include beautiful walks, fishing, and horse riding, plus treatment rooms and a health club for pampering. Excellent food too, whether fine dining in the manor house's classical Lady Helen, or contemporary style in The Hound

restaurant at the adjacent Hunter's Yard Hotel.

**Where:** Mount Juliet Estate, Thomastown, Co Kilkenny; mountjuliet.ie **What:** Offers include stay at Hunter's Yard and Dine in the Hound, from c.€249pp.

### 7. Lisnavagh Estate, Carlow

Beautifully situated on the Wicklow/Carlow border and home to the McClintock Bunbury family, Lisnavagh is renowned for weddings, retreats, forest bathing and, of course, the famed Bunbury Boards. They're not averse to putting on some gastronomic adventures too. This time it's The Supper Club at Lisnavagh Garden Wing, with Chef Steve Mercer, known for his vegetarian food truck in

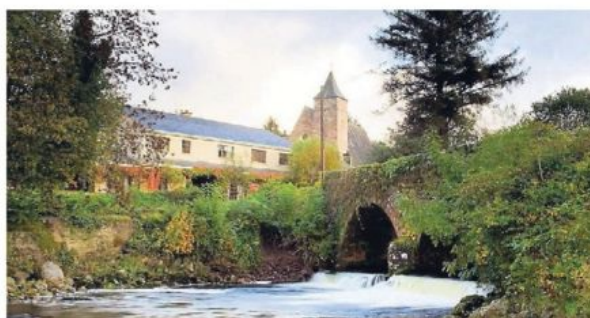
Clonmel, and host Kate O'Mahony of Marnie & Lily's in Kinsale, who will pair Steve's dishes with her wines.

**Where:** Lisnavagh Estate Rothvilly Co Carlow; lisnavagh.com; events@lisnavagh.com; 059 916 1473

**What:** Vegetarian gourmet dinner with wine, €120 per person. Self catering and B&B accommodation available.

### 8. Adare Manor, Limerick

A bucket list destination, this magnificent neo-Gothic mansion on 900 acres beside the River Maigue was bought by Limerick-born businessman JP McManus in 2015 and now has a luxurious new bedroom wing, a sumptuous spa, swimming pool and cinema. Outdoors, the redesigned



Welcoming Hanora's Cottage in Waterford attracts walkers and food lovers.



Above: Stunning Marfield House in Wexford. Below: The Manor House at Mount Juliet Estate in Kilkenny.



Castle Leslie in Co Monaghan.

championship golf course takes pride of place but there's much more, including falconry, fishing and archery. The romantic Oak Room restaurant offers memorable fine dining by executive chef Mike Tweedie and other treats include afternoon tea in The Gallery.

**Where:** Adare Manor, Adare, Co Limerick; [adaremanor.com](http://adaremanor.com)

**What:** Taste of Adare 1-night manor house stay with Oak Room candlelit dining from c.€1,295 for two.

#### 9. The Lodge at Ashford Castle, Mayo

In common ownership with neighbouring Ashford Castle, the heart of this boutique hotel on the estate (and sharing its activities) is a fine period house with views down Lough Corrib from the bar, restaurant and the front rooms. And in Wilde's Restaurant — a lovely first-floor space with views from window tables — head chef Jonathan Keane serves wonderfully imaginative cuisine based on the best seasonal local produce.

**Where:** The Lodge at Ashford Castle, Cong, Co Mayo; [thelodgeac.com](http://thelodgeac.com)

**What:** Offers include 'Autumn Exclusive', Sunday-Thursday, November 1 to December 22: from €299 DB&B for two, with access to Eala health and fitness centre, golf and tennis courts.

#### 10. Castle Leslie Estate, Monaghan

A lovely destination in itself — and a great base for exploring an area that deserves to be better known — you can

stay in the extraordinary castle but most rooms are at The Lodge, a sensitively designed modern hotel. It's built around a stable courtyard, complete with an equestrian centre and Victorian treatment rooms, and dining is mainly in the informal Conor's Bar or Snaffles Restaurant, where the good cooking that has always been a feature here may have been inspired by old recipes from the Castle Leslie Estate Cookbook.

**Where:** Castle Leslie Estate, Glaslough, Co Monaghan; [castleslesie.com](http://castleslesie.com)

**What:** Offers include Overnight Escape at The Lodge, from c.€420 B&B/D for two.

#### 11. The Old Inn, Down

Now owned by the Galgorm Collection, this charming 17th century inn always has a welcoming fire in the cosy foyer. While handy to Belfast, it's near the sea, with miles of scenic walking nearby at the North Down Coastal Path and Crawfordsburn Country Park. And you'll find good food in The Restaurant (fine dining), or the characterful 1614 Bar, which is a popular casual dining place. And it's pet friendly too.

**Where:** The Old Inn, Crawfordsburn, Co Down; [theoldinn.com](http://theoldinn.com)

**What:** Autumn Escape Package, Sunday to Thursday, September 1 to November 7; B&B+D for two with bottle of house wine and access to the Treetop Spa, from €325.

#### 12. Cliff House Hotel, Waterford

This chic five-star bolthole overlooking Ardmore Bay draws guests as

much for the culinary offerings as the setting. The Well spa's outdoor infinity pool is stunningly positioned, but the meticulously sourced local and seasonal produce that's transformed into memorable fine dining and excellent informal fare by an ambitious kitchen team has many fans too. Stylish self-catering properties are also offered nearby.

**Where:** Cliff House Hotel, Ardmore, Co Waterford; [cliffhousehotel.ie](http://cliffhousehotel.ie)

**What:** Autumn Solstice DB&B offer, from c.€640; includes welcome cocktail, outdoor seaweed baths in The Well by the Sea and guided cliff walk. Similar offers at sister hotel Cliff at Lyons, Co Kildare; [cliffatlyons.ie](http://cliffatlyons.ie)

#### 13. BrookLodge & Macreddin Village, Wicklow

Especially known for its wonderful food and sumptuous spa, this immensely spacious, welcoming and very comfortable 'green' hotel and 'village' is rightly famous for promoting organic and wild food as part of its allure.

Home to The Strawberry Tree, Ireland's first certified organic restaurant, La Taverna Armento (informal Italian dining), and the atmospheric Actons Country Pub (just the spot to enjoy their organic craft brews), it's all delicious, no matter where you go. Relaxing and inspiring, BrookLodge makes a great base for walking, hiking, cycling or simply exploring across the wonderful and picturesque Wicklow hills.

**Where:** BrookLodge & Macreddin Villag, Co Wicklow; [brooklodge.com](http://brooklodge.com)

**What:** Autumn Escape offers includes B&B from c.€210 for two sharing.

#### 14. Marfield House, Wexford

Once the residence of the Earls of Courtown, this impressive property was opened by Mary and the late Ray Bowe as a hotel in 1978, and today's guests continue to be pampered by their daughters Margaret and Laura who run the business with verve and vision. Alongside the traditionally elegant main house, the lovely café-restaurant, The Duck, offers informal dining and, when Marfield House and The Duck are closed (Monday to Tuesday), stays at Duck Lodge and the lovely Pond Suites are available.

**Where:** Marfield House, Courtown Road, Gorey, Co Wexford; [marfieldhouse.com](http://marfieldhouse.com)

**What:** Midweek offers include Wednesday Falconry Display with B&B in The Duck from c.€169.

#### 15. Hanora's Cottage Waterford

This spacious and beautifully located country guesthouse is a very special place. Mary Wall and her family offer outstanding hospitality, luxurious accommodation and a special focus on good food. Eoin and Judith Wall are both Euro-Toques chefs, using local foods from small suppliers whenever possible. People travel from far and wide to dine in the restaurant and overnight guests begin the day with Hanora's legendary breakfast buffet.

**Where:** Hanora's Cottage, Nire Valley, Ballymacarbray, Co Waterford; [hanorascottage.com](http://hanorascottage.com)

**What:** Short breaks offered; call for details and best rates. T: 052 613 6134.