



Tour Operator

What To Know About Celebrating St. Patrick's Day in Ireland



by **Lacey Pfalz**

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St. Patrick's Day is a global holiday, but it's no more important than in Ireland, where it's been celebrated for centuries as the feast day of the country's patron saint.

TravelPulse got the inside scoop on what it's like to celebrate St. Patrick's Day in Ireland from Stephen Cotter, the managing director at CIE Tours, who offers [over 90 years of experience](#) introducing travelers to Ireland.

What St. Patrick's Day Is Like In Ireland

“St. Patrick's Day in Ireland is like Carnival in Brazil or Mardi Gras in New Orleans – it's a fun, bucket-list experience that so many people dream about experiencing, whether they're of Irish descent or just Irish at heart,” said Cotter. “The day is celebrated all around the world, from New York to Buenos Aires to Beijing – but there's nothing like being at the big show in Dublin or soaking in the atmosphere of one of the smaller cities and towns.”

Cotter says that unlike many of the [St. Patrick's Day celebrations in the U.S.](#) and elsewhere, in Ireland it's a very family friendly event, with big parades, live music, literature and arts events and kid-friendly activities.

This year, it's also perfect for sports lovers: the 130th season of the Six Nations Championship rugby tournament ends on the same weekend as St. Patrick's Day, with a March 16 match at Aviva Stadium in Dublin between Ireland and Scotland.

“St. Patrick's Day in Ireland just keeps getting bigger and bigger,” said Cotter. “Years ago, it was a much quieter day, and even the Dublin parade was a far more sedate and local affair. Today, the parade is an enormous spectacle, and it's accompanied by a four-day festival that has grown in the past 20 years or so to a colossal event, featuring performances of music, dance, theater, and literature, as well as a feast of visual arts, food, wellness, and community activities.”



The Blarney Castle and Gardens in Cork, Ireland. (Photo Credit: Blarney Castle and Gardens)

Practical Tips For Celebrating St. Paddy's Day in Ireland

Cotter mentions several key things travelers heading to Ireland should know about St. Patrick's Day in Ireland.

- St. Patrick's Day isn't just one day long, so arrive a few days before March 17, and make sure to plan well in advance.

- While Dublin might offer the most popular choice for travelers celebrating St. Patrick's Day, every major city and even smaller towns offers great opportunities to celebrate the holiday. For example, Westport in County May offers days-long celebrations, and it's located near Croagh Patrick, where the famed saint spent 40 days over 1,500 years ago.
- Wear green! Another tradition is wearing a shamrock for the day, then "drowning the shamrock" by dunking it in a shot of whiskey at the end of the day.
- St. Patrick's Day is a public holiday in Ireland, observed this year on Monday, March 18, so do research on the attractions you'd like to visit to make sure they'll be open when you want to visit them.
- St. Patrick is never called St. Patty in Ireland, but he is referred to as St. Paddy.

What's New With CIE Tours?

While CIE Tours doesn't offer St. Patrick's Day-themed tours, there are over ten tours happening during St. Patrick's Day, and each one will be able to experience a part of the festivities.



For 2024, the tour operator added four new tours.

[Wild Atlantic Way](#) offers an exploration of Ireland's western coastline; the [Scottish & Irish Sampler](#) combines some of the best of Scotland and Ireland; the [Scottish Daytripper](#) offers an easy, one-accommodation trip from Glasgow, featuring day trips to destinations like Edinburgh and the Highlands; and the [Tuscan Treasures with Cinque Terre](#) itinerary includes a stay in the spa town of Montecatini Termini.

The tour operator also recently established its Responsible Tourism policy, implementing a carbon strategy and hiring a dedicated sustainability manager. Its Irish Gold Tour is now being operated by a biofuel-powered coach this year.

To celebrate St. Patrick's Day, CIE Tours is offering [a new promotion](#), running now through March 22. Travelers who buy airfare with participating Ireland tours will receive 50 percent off their travel companion's airfare.