



PHOTOGRAPHY CONNOR MAGUIRE

LIGHTHOUSE LUXURY

Clare Island Lighthouse, Clare Island, Co Mayo

I've always wanted to stay in a lighthouse. The mere idea evokes half-remembered *Famous Five* plots and a sense of unbridled adventure. Perched high on craggy cliffs, standing watch over beautiful Clew Bay, Clare Island Lighthouse is a suitably statesmanlike sentry that ticks all the boxes for children's-book tropes (bonus fact: Clare Island was the stomping ground of 16th-century pirate queen Grace O'Malley).

Luckily, lighthouse living these days doesn't mean roughing it. Now decommissioned, the 1806 edifice has been reimagined as a boutique guesthouse. The night we arrived, as the Atlantic surged and seethed below and a banshee-worthy wind howled, we remained snug in the draught-proof confines of the glamorous Sauna Suite – a fabulously refurbished cottage with, yes, an ensuite sauna. (There is something utterly indulgent about having your own sauna: a heavenly hothouse from which to admire the wind-whipped grass and grazing sheep outside the window.) Other big draws in the accommodation options are the round Tower Room, for that ultimate lighthouse feel, and Achill View, with arresting vistas over to its namesake island. Happily, you don't need to bag the Tower Room to appreciate the venue's heights – this is Ireland's only two-towered lighthouse. The main Lantern Tower is open to all guests and is a hot spot for pre- and post-prandial drinks with a difference.

If, like us, you eat everything you're offered (dinner is six courses; we counted at least four at breakfast), you won't be doing much walking, so if the weather's bad, no biggie. The welcoming hosts appear to cook around the clock, conjuring up gorgeous gourmet dishes using top-notch local ingredients, and cheerfully accommodating idiosyncratic dietary requirements (no cheese, in my case). For more energetic types, the island's charming windswept landscape makes for breathtaking walks, and the lighthouse staff will happily offer you a packed lunch as you head off in search of Granuaile's grave. Clare Island is just a short ferry hop from Roonagh pier, near Louisburgh – a great alternative destination if you're planning a trip down Westport way. And did we mention you get to sleep in a lighthouse? **SHARON MINEY**

DETAILS Accommodation (including meals and transport to and from the pier) in the Tower House, Achill View or Sauna Suite costs €245 per person sharing per night; other rooms start from €175 per person, 087 668 9758; clareislandlighthouse.com.



CITY BREAK

The Radisson Blu, Dublin

As wonderful as it can be to hop in a car and spend a weekend cocooned in a gorgeous country hideaway, there is something almost laughably luxurious about being able to walk out your front door and, 15 minutes later, check into your hotel for the evening. That's what we found ourselves doing one grey Sunday evening as we tried out the Radisson Blu Royal Hotel's Suite Sunday offer at Golden Lane in Dublin 8.

Within minutes of arriving, long, decadent bubble baths had been had, fluffy robes donned and room service ordered. Sitting in our spacious junior suite tucking into a seriously tasty red onion, chorizo and goat's cheese pizza, with an expertly made whiskey sour on the side, all thoughts of laundry, lunch prep and the usual Sunday chores were banished, and the evening was spent as all good Sundays should be – reading, chilling, and sleeping.

NATHALIE MARQUEZ COURTNEY

DETAILS Suite Sunday rooms start at €250 per room per night, including bed and breakfast, a cocktail on arrival, newspaper delivery the following morning, and 3pm checkout, 01 898 2900; radissonblu.ie.

