

Crisper Weather, Smaller Crowds: Think Beyond the Summer for European Travel (continued)

Here are a few reasons why you might want to consider making your next trip in the lesser-traveled seasons:

Cooler Weather

The air is a little crisper, and buying that classic Aran or cashmere sweater seems all the more appealing when you can wear it right away. The pubs will seem a little cozier – all the more tempting for an evening of chat with the locals by the fireside. And if you're venturing to a warmer destination, like Italy, the cooler weather is likely to keep you more invigorated for daytime sightseeing.

Night Lights

Sure the days are shorter, but the lights of winter have their own allure. In Iceland, for example, this is your chance to spot the elusive Aurora Borealis – never guaranteed, but one of the delights of the dark winter sky. And in Iceland and elsewhere, there are always the holiday lights, with many destinations featuring beautiful Christmas decorations, lighting up towns with a seasonal glow.

Smaller Crowds

Most of the main attractions of Europe are open all year round, and you'll have shorter waits and a roomier feel when you visit them outside the summer months. Get a little more elbow room as you gaze at the art in Florence, and a shorter wait to kiss the famed stone at Blarney Castle.

Better Prices

Both land tours and airfare tend to offer great value in the off-season. And tours offer two-great value vacations designed specifically to take advantage of off-season value:

—[Evergreen Ireland South](#) takes guests to see many of Ireland's classic highlights, such as the Cliffs of Moher, the Guinness Storehouse and Blarney Castle, and offers plenty of free time to explore Dublin, Killarney, Waterford and Kilkenny.

—[Evergreen Ireland North](#) treats guests to a day in Dublin and a visit to Sean's Bar before heading to Galway, then up to Donegal and Belfast. Special stops along the way include the Giant's Causeway and the charming town of Carlingford, rich in medieval heritage. Enjoy dinner with traditional music at the Crosskeys Inn, the oldest thatched pub in Ireland.

—[Taste of Ireland](#) takes guests to see some of Ireland's "greatest hits", including the Ring of Kerry, Blarney Castle, the Cliffs of Moher, Dublin and more. It's available as a five-, six- or seven-day tour, with a trip to Galway included in some itineraries.

—[Irish Adventure](#) is offered in eight- or nine-day variations as a round-trip tour from Dublin. Guests will get to see most of the classic highlights included in 'Taste of Ireland', but also circle the entire island, taking in Donegal, Derry, the Giant's Causeway and Titanic Belfast.

—[Northern Lights Quest of Iceland](#) is a six-day tour that circles out from Reykjavik to take in all the spectacular scenic highlights: the Golden Circle,

Jökulsárlón Glacier Lagoon, the Blue Lagoon and more. Plus opportunities to hunt for the ephemeral Northern Lights.

—[Taste of Italy](#) is a seven-day tour offering the iconic experiences to suit every first-time visitor: ride a gondola in Venice, enjoy Tuscan cuisine in a local restaurant in Florence, taste wine in Orvieto, see the Roman Colosseum, the Sistine Chapel and so much more.