

Travel News & Advice **Celebrate New Year's Eve with a spectacular street party, a snowy escape or a seriously bracing swim**

Welcome 2016 by staying close to home and joining the crowds in Edinburgh, or going off piste with an unconventional overnight stay in France

Aoife O'Riordain Wednesday 25 November 2015 0 comments



43



Edinburgh's Loony Dook

Whether 2015 has been a year to remember or one best forgotten, there are plenty of

opportunities to mark its end and usher in 2016.

Scottish songs

Join the crowds for the rousing rendition of “Auld Lang Syne” on its home turf for a traditional Scottish Hogmanay. Around 150,000 people take to Edinburgh's streets to greet the New Year, and this year festivities will start on 30 December with a Torchlight Procession of 10,000 participants.

Although The Concert in the Gardens is already sold out, there are plenty of other ways to party, such as the Old Town Ceilidh (tickets £45), Street Party (tickets £25) and a dazzling fireworks display (free) when the clocks strike midnight (edinburghshogmanay.com; visitscotland.com). In the morning, head to the Firth of Forth for a bracing hangover cure by taking part in the Loony Dook dip.



In a flash: celebrations in Dublin

Party on

Dublin never needs an excuse for a party, and its New Year celebrations will have added gravitas this year as they herald commemorations for the 100th anniversary of the Easter Rising, which paved the way for Irish independence. The three-day

festival begins on 30 December with themed events, culminating in a concert and New Year countdown at College Green.

Highlights include Luminosity, which will tell the story of some of Dublin's best-loved landmarks through 3D digital displays, the NY Food Village on Dame Street, and the Spoken Word Festival, with pop-up events, literary discussions and poetry slams. Resolutions can also be kick-started with exercise classes and a 5km Fun Run from Dublin Castle on 1 January (nyfdublin.com).



Pic du Midi Observatory

Snowy sleepover

The dawn of 2016 will be made all the more spectacular by spending the night of 31 December almost 3,000m high in the splendid isolation of the Pic du Midi Observatory in the French Pyrénées.

Visitors arrive by cable car at 4.30pm on 31 December for a night of celebration with a gourmet dinner followed by a stay in one of the observatory's 15 simple but charming rooms, normally used by scientists studying celestial bodies. On New Year's Day, experienced skiers can ski down the mountain with a guide; non-skiers

return by cable car. The price of €349pp (£246) includes an aperitif, dinner, B&B and the cable car. Stays can also be extended (00 33 5 62 56 70 00;resa.tourisme-hautes-pyrenees.com).

Bright lights

Forsake fireworks for an infinitely more impressive display, the Northern Lights. The depths of winter are the best time to observe this shimmering spectacle, and Manshausen Island Resort is ideal if you want to escape the pressure of the celebrations. Owned by the polar explorer Borge Ousland, it is set in the Steigen Archipelago, off the north-west coast of Norway, within the Arctic Circle.

Magnetic North Travel (0845 5195 242;magneticnorthtravel.com) has three nights from £895pp, including return flights from London via Oslo, transfers, one night in a hotel and two nights at the resort on a B&B basis.

Sail away

If you're feeling extravagant, round off 2015 aboard one of The Strand cruise ship's (thestrandcruise.com) maiden voyages down Burma's Irrawaddy River. The floating sister to Rangoon's The Strand Hotel, it oozes colonial elegance and is one of the newest and most luxurious boats to set sail on the iconic waterway.

It departs from the ancient city of Bagan, renowned for its 2,000 temples, stupas and monuments, on 29 December for a four-night New Year Celebration. During the voyage there is a New Year's Eve party on board before the ship docks in Mandalay. The price, from £2,356pp through Original Travel (020 3582 4990; originaltravel.co.uk), includes full board with a special offer of complimentary travel for one person if two share a cabin. Flights extra.