

THE IRISH RACING CALENDAR





IRISH HORSE RACING GUIDES

The Irish Racing Calendar, Month by Month

Irish racing runs all year. Here is how the year usually shapes up, festival by festival, so you can plan a trip around the meetings that suit you.

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At a glance

FIXTURES IN 2026

391 allocated, plus four floating fixtures in reserve

RACECOURSES

26

TURF FLAT SEASON

Roughly mid-March to mid-November

JUMPS PEAK

November to April

ALL-WEATHER RACING

Dundalk, Ireland's only floodlit all-weather track

There is racing somewhere in Ireland almost every week of the year. Horse Racing Ireland allocated 391 fixtures for 2026, spread across 26 racecourses. The year has a clear shape, though: jump racing (National Hunt) peaks in winter and spring, the Flat takes over through summer and early autumn, and the two overlap at the big summer festivals.

Exact dates change every year, so treat the timings below as a guide to when things **usually** happen and always confirm with the racecourse before booking travel.

Good to know

New to racing? Read our guide to your first day at the races and our National Hunt vs Flat explainer before you pick a meeting.

1 January

The heart of the jumps season. Racing carries on through the winter at courses around the country, and it is a good time to see the horses that will be aimed at the big spring festivals. Wrap up well.

2 Late January or February: the Dublin Racing Festival

The Dublin Racing Festival at Leopardstown is held over a weekend in late January or early February. First run in 2018, it brings together a cluster of Ireland's top jump races and has quickly become one of the key dates of the National Hunt season.

3 March

The turf Flat season usually starts around the middle of March, while jump racing continues at full strength.

4 April: Easter and Punchestown

April is one of the busiest months of the year.

- **Easter:** the Fairyhouse Easter Festival in Co. Meath is headlined by the Irish Grand National on Easter Monday, the richest race in the Irish jumps calendar with a purse of €500,000 in 2024. Because it follows Easter, the dates move each year.
- **Good Friday:** in 2026 the Curragh staged Ireland's first Good Friday race meeting, on 3 April, as a trial approved for two years.
- **Late April:** the Punchestown Festival in Co. Kildare usually runs for five days, Tuesday to Saturday, and closes the Irish jumps season in style.

5 May

The Flat is now in full swing. The first two Irish Classics, the **Irish 1,000 Guineas** and **Irish 2,000 Guineas**, are run over a mile at the Curragh in May. Killarney also holds the first of its three summer festivals this month.

6 June

Summer evenings bring evening racing at many courses, a lovely way to see a meeting after work. Towards the end of the month the attention turns to the Curragh.

7 Late June and early July: the Irish Derby

The **Irish Derby** is run over a mile and a half at the Curragh in late June or early July, the centrepiece of the Irish Derby Festival. The **Irish Oaks**, over the same distance for fillies, follows at the Curragh in July.

8 July

Killarney's five-day July festival, with a mix of Flat and jump racing and a Ladies' Day, is the highlight of its season. See our guide to Killarney summer racing.

Then comes the big one. The Galway Races begin on the last Monday of July and run for seven days at Ballybrit, drawing more than 150,000 people over the week. The Galway Plate on Wednesday and the Galway Hurdle on Thursday are the feature races.

9 August

The Galway festival runs into the start of August. Killarney holds its third summer festival in August, and there is a busy programme of Flat and jump racing around the country, including seaside and country meetings that are worth seeking out.

10 September: Champions and the Harvest Festival

- **Irish Champions Festival:** usually held over a weekend in mid-September across two courses, Leopardstown on the Saturday and the Curragh on the Sunday. In 2026 it took place on 12 and 13 September. The Irish Champion Stakes and the Irish St Leger, the last Irish Classic of the year, are the feature races. See the Irish Champions Festival guide.

- **Listowel Harvest Festival:** seven days of Flat and jump racing in Co. Kerry. In 2026 it ran from 20 to 26 September, with the Kerry National, worth €200,000, on the Wednesday. See the Listowel Harvest Festival guide and our Listowel racecourse page.
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11 October and November

The seasons turn. Jump racing picks up again as the ground softens, and the turf Flat season usually winds down around the middle of November. After that, Flat racing continues on the floodlit all-weather track at Dundalk, the only one of its kind in Ireland.

12 December: Leopardstown at Christmas

The Leopardstown Christmas Festival runs from St Stephen's Day, 26 December, to 29 December, with Grade 1 races on each of the four days. For many Dublin families it is as much a part of Christmas as the turkey.

13 Planning a trip around the calendar

- **Book early for the big festivals.** Accommodation near Galway, Listowel and Killarney fills up well in advance for festival weeks.
- **Midweek fixtures are quieter.** If you want space and cheaper tickets, look beyond the festivals.
- **Check the fixture list.** Horse Racing Ireland publishes the full fixture list each year, and dates can shift, as they did at Thurles and Tipperary in 2026.

Once you know when you want to go, our racecourse pages cover getting there, and our jobs board lists work in the industry if you would like to be part of it all year round.

Questions people ask

When is the Irish racing season?

Irish racing runs all year. Jump racing peaks from November to April, while the turf Flat season usually runs from around mid-March to mid-November. Flat racing continues through the winter on the all-weather track at Dundalk.

When are the Galway Races?

The Galway Races summer festival starts on the last Monday of July each year and runs for seven days at Ballybrit, so it usually carries on into early August.

What are the Irish Classics?

Five Group 1 Flat races run at the Curragh: the Irish 1,000 Guineas and 2,000 Guineas in May, the Irish Derby in late June or early July, the Irish Oaks in July, and the Irish St Leger in September.

When is the Leopardstown Christmas Festival?

It runs from 26 to 29 December each year at Leopardstown in south Dublin, with Grade 1 jump races on each of the four days.

Sources

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Last reviewed 30 September 2026. Dates and details change, so check with the racecourse before you travel.



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