

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

CHECK IN

ADARE MANOR

Here’s a place in Ireland where you can live out your Lord- or Lady-of-the-manor fantasies

By Diane Bair
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Globe Correspondents

Somewhere between the meet-and-greet with an African fish eagle, the sea broth facial, and the honeysuckle-tinged rare Irish whiskey, you’ll realize that Adare Manor is no ordinary hotel. It’s a neo-Gothic vision with fantastical woodcarvings, gold-leaf ceilings, and soaring towers — something J.K. Rowling might have conceived. Commissioned by the 2nd Earl of Dunraven in the 1830s as a family home, this imposing limestone-walled estate was modeled after the great houses and cathedrals of Europe. Set on 840 acres along the River Maigue in Ireland’s County Limerick, the manor took 30 years to complete. That makes its recent 21-month-long renovation sound like a mere blip in time. Builders seamlessly matched new limestone to the old, something that would have challenged even the Property Brothers, and added modern creature comforts galore. The result is winning raves all around. Virtuoso named it the hotel of the year for 2018. Adare Manor also sits comfortably on the “best” lists of publications like Conde’ Nast Traveler and Travel + Leisure.

“We gutted the house from the floorboards to the roof,” says Paul Heery, general manager. While keeping its historical elements intact — including 365 leaded windows, 52 chimneys, seven stone parlors, and four towers to mark the annual tally of days, weeks, and seasons — they added modern conveniences like air conditioning and elevators, and a new 42-bedroom wing. Guests who settle into one of the 104 rooms discover there’s more to these rooms than meets the eye: Behind the 19th-century artwork, tapestries, marble bathtubs, and old-school furnishings are high-tech underpinnings. The brocade draperies can open and close with the push of a button. Those bathroom floors are radiantly heated, and lighted via sensors. A tablet allows guests to add mood lighting or adjust the temperature of the room. TVs are the latest high-def models. Beyond the technology, the beds are big and plush, the toiletries are by Italian luxury brand Aqua di Parma, and the mini-bar is well stocked with goodies — all complimentary. All guest rooms have the same appointments, but they differ in size and views.

So, you’ll definitely be comfortable, but what is there to do here, about a half-hour’s drive from Shannon? On property, you’ll discover walled gardens, walking trails and parklands, a children’s fairy garden, and a Cedar of Lebanon that’s one of the oldest trees in Ireland. Activities include falconry in the Paddocks, archery, fishing, clay shooting (the instructor is on Ireland’s Olympic skeet shooting team), and a gun-dog experience that showcases the manor’s Labradors and spaniels (there’s no actual hunting on the property). “Dog lovers really enjoy it,” Heery says. There are bikes to borrow, and an indoor pool and fitness center. Oh, and there’s a Tom Fazio-designed golf course, and one of 11 La Mer spas in the world, open only to overnight guests. There’s also a 29-seat cinema where they offer kids’ movies in the afternoon and a film for adults every evening.



PHOTOS BY DIANE BAIR FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Adare Manor has 365 leaded windows, 52 chimneys, seven stone parlors, and four towers.

Afternoon tea is served in the in the Gallery.

You can enjoy scones and sweets in the Oak Room.



Of course, you’ll want to wander into Adare Village. With just 1,000 people (including members of the Dunraven family), it is home to a smattering of small shops and restaurants, and four pubs. Best bet for dinner is 1826 Adare, a cozy, chef-run place that’s a local favorite.

Speaking of food, the cookery at Adare Manor is classic Ireland with a modern twist, like the hotel itself. During renovation, the new culinary team took a nine-day tour around Ireland to visit farmers and purveyors to design a locally sourced seasonal menu. Sample the result in the Carriage House Restaurant (known for dry-aged beef and Connemara lamb) or the tasting menu of the more-formal Oak Room. Breakfast and afternoon tea are served in the tapestry-lined Gallery. You’ll feel every bit the Lord or Lady as you select from the tiers of sweet and savory treats (scones with Irish butter!) and try the 1832 signature tea blend. They also offer theme teas for vegans and vegetarians, plus a champagne tea, and even a children’s tea.

Kids in the manor house, you say? Actual kids? Indeed. Small fry can take part in activities like falconry, and they have their own menu of activities as well, including scavenger hunts to find all of the raven symbols (the Dunravens’

spirit animal) on the grounds. Not for kids: the Tack Room, designed for adults who favor bespoke cocktails. They make their own syrups of lavender, juniper, and fig, foraging on the grounds for some ingredients. The signature tippie is a proprietary Irish whiskey made in collaboration with Middleton Very Rare, aged in a cask for 23 years.

As you suit up in your jaunty Dubarry gear (available to borrow as a courtesy of Adare Manor), you’ll definitely feel like you’ve stepped back in time. Those e-mails can wait — there’s an owl waiting to make your acquaintance.

Adare Manor, Adare, County Limerick, Ireland; +353 (0) 61 605 200. www.adaremanor.com. Rooms from \$339.



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HERE

CELEBRATE NEW ENGLAND’S BEST CIDER

Learn the art of creating good ciders, meet cider makers, and sample new releases during the New England Cider Fest, April 17-19. The event, held at venues in the Boston area, features ciders by Artifact, ANXO, Eden, Snowdrift, and others. It includes a Cider 101 dinner at the Island Creek Oyster Bar in Burlington, a panel discussion on the Rosé cider movement at Row 34 in Boston’s Fort Point area, and an ANXO cidery pop-up at The Hawthorne in Kenmore Square. *\$65 per person for Cider 101 dinner; all other events free.* www.islandcreekoysterbar.com and www.row34.com.

DON’T MISS THIS WIFE-CARRYING COMPETITION

Grab your partner and head to Sunday River for the World Snowshoe Wife-Carrying Championship, April 20. During this fun and challenging event, participants must run through a 278-yard obstacle course that includes snow hills, a slalom course, and a mogul field. Racers can use the piggyback, fireman’s, or Estonian carry, or any technique that doesn’t let their partners touch the ground. The carrier must wear a helmet, goggles, and snowshoes, and may opt to wear a belt (to give their partner something to grab onto). Two teams face off at the same time, and prizes go to the top three teams, the fastest team with a combined age of 80 or more, and the fastest team with a combined weight of more than 350 pounds. Then join in the tailgating party where you’ll enjoy



live music, tailgate prizes, and more. Race partners don’t have to be related. *\$25 per couple.* www.sundayriver.com.

THERE

EMBRACE RWANDA’S WILDLIFE ON THIS TOUR

See chimpanzees, elephants, giraffes, lions, rhinos, and other animals on a new 10-day Rwanda Wildlife and Culture Tour run by Kigali-based Augustine Tours. On this trip, you’ll see volcanoes, lush green jungles, and some of the last-remaining gorillas on Earth. The trip includes a full-day game drive and birding in Akagera park, and a chance to track chimpanzees. *\$2,270 per person, based on double occupancy, includes three-star B&B accommodations, transportation in a private four-wheel-drive vehicle, admission fees to parks, and an English-speaking guide throughout the trip.* www.augustinetours.com.

WANDER THE COAST OF WALES

Explore coastal Wales on foot with The

Carter Company, a “slow-travel” tour company that has launched a luxury tour that covers just 30 miles in eight days. Celtic Caper, geared to all abilities and fitness levels, takes walkers along the gentle Pembrokeshire Coast Path. Explore villages and historic sites along the route, including neolithic stones and an Iron Age hill fort, and



stay in luxury hotels, such as an old windmill and a medieval castle. Insider tip: go between mid-April and mid-July, when the birds are breeding, the wildflowers are in full bloom, and dolphins can be spotted along the coast. *Rates start at \$2,069 per person, double occupancy, and include accommodations for seven nights, a boat trip, and luggage transfers.* www.the-carter-company.com.

EVERYWHERE

THIS DEVICE HELPS YOU SLEEP

Fall asleep to the sound of the ocean, a fan, or other soothing sounds while traveling with the new LectroFan Micro2 sleep sound machine. This palm-size device works great for blocking out noisy neighbors and other annoying sounds in your hotel room. It offers 11 unique digital sounds, in-

cluding five fan sounds, four brown/pink noises, and two ocean sounds. It has a moveable top that lets you direct sound in a specific direction, and it also serves as a Bluetooth speaker so you can use it to play music or other audio while traveling. *\$34.95.* www.soundofsleep.com.



KEEP ITEMS COOL ON YOUR TRIP

Pack snacks and drinks for your next road trip, beach outing, or other adventure in OtterBox’s new Trooper 12 cooler. This durable and leakproof cooler keeps ice intact for up to three days, so its contents stay cool. The 12-quart cooler has enough room to hold several lunches and drinks for a day trip. It’s made of durable nylon and fiberglass-reinforced plastic (Duraflex) so it can withstand the rigors of travel, and it has a handy front pouch for stashing a can opener or car keys. The Trooper 12 has a built-in handle and shoulder strap for easy carrying, and measures about 11-by-14¼-by-12½ inches. *\$199.99.* www.otterbox.com.

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