

Client: The Twelve Hotel
Source: The Irish Times (Magazine)
Date: 03 June 2017
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Size: 2679cm2
Value: 44524.98

BEST PLACES TO STAY

Spas

Lough Erne Resort, Fermanagh

You don't have to be part of the global elite attending the G8 (who stayed here in 2013) to enjoy luxury in the lakeland district of Enniskillen, although of course it always helps. Looked at another way, this beautiful spa is the cheapest way possible to transport yourself to Thailand, manned – or, rather, womanned – as it is by authentic Thai masseuses. Facilities include a light therapy sauna, crystal aroma steam room, exotic rain shower, deep-sleep room and infinity pool – and that's before a therapist comes to collect you for your treatments. The Thai Spa Escape package includes all this and a floral footbath, oriental shoulder and scalp massage and a personalised facial, for €155, until the end of June. Lough Erne Resort, Belleek Road, Enniskillen, Fermanagh 048-66323230, loughernereresort.com

Ice House Hotel, Co Mayo

Chill out at the Chill Spa, where everything is designed to take advantage of the views out over the river Moy. Rest your eyes on it while making the most of its thermal garden, outdoor barrel sauna and outdoor hot tubs. Forget the weather, and all your aches and pains, while up to your neck in bubbly – the hot tub kind, the other can come later. By the time you read this, the hotel should have added outdoor seaweed baths, too. Inside there are light and dark relaxation rooms and Voya treatments on tap. The two-night Stay and Chill package, including dinner on the night of your choice, costs €274 per room per night. Ice House, The Quay, Ballina, Co Mayo 096-23500, icehousehotel.ie

Seafield Hotel, Wexford

This swish hotel's award-winning Oceo spa has a thermal suite with hydrotherapy pool, outdoor vitality pool, hamam suite, rasul chamber for steam and mud treat-

ments, plus aromatherapy suites, monsoon showers and an ice grotto to tighten those pores. Products are from Payot, Neom Organics, Vita Liberta, Elemis and more. For the blokes there's a hot-towel shave and full-body massage from €99, or opt for a couple's package for the same price each, available Monday to Thursday. Stay over in spacious rooms, many with sea views and of course, being Ballymoney, you've miles of golden sand on your doorstep.

Ballymoney, Seafield, Gorey, Co Wexford 053-9424000, seafieldhotel.com

Monart, Co Wexford

Monart is in a league of its own. A five-star destination spa with a range of treatments and classes, it's a little bit of Arizona in the sunny southeast. Sleep and relaxation is part of the treatment here, which alone will be music to frazzled ears. Three-night

breaks cost from €329 per person sharing, including one dinner, a 30-minute treatment, unrestricted access to the thermal suite and as many scheduled classes as you can fit in without stressing – which is strictly forbidden.

Enniscorthy, Co Wexford 053-9238999, monart.ie

Cloona Health Retreat, Co Mayo

Not a spa in the strict sense, but if you ask some of the country's most successful captains – and captainesses – of Irish industry where they go to for a mind-and-body reboot, this one probably tops the list. It works its magic through a mix of yoga, meditation, walking and diet, and it's located in an old woollen mill restored, of course, by Tibetan monks in the 1960s. And it's great

value, too. A five-day retreat, from Sunday to Friday, costs from €640.

Westport, Co Mayo, 098-25251, cloona.ie

—CATHERINE MACK



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Foodie

Castlewood House, Co Kerry

Helen and Brian Heaton's stylish guest-house – more of a small boutique hotel, really, overlooking Dingle Bay – is exquisite and serves one of the best breakfasts in the country. Porridge with cream, brown sugar and a drizzle of whiskey, Irish Mist or Baileys, followed by chef Brian's favourite omelette with bacon, spinach and Swiss cheese, and a few treats from the impressive buffet

table, will set you up for the day. A recent addition at Castlewood is afternoon tea (€25/€35 with Champagne), served on Helen's antique china in the elegant drawing room, and featuring recipes created by Tracy Coyne, Great Irish Bake Off winner in 2014. It must be prebooked, and is only available to groups of six or more. B&B single from €75/double €85.

Castlewood House, Dingle, Co Kerry
066-9152788, castlewooddingle.com

Newforge House, Co Armagh

Hens roaming free in a well-tended orchard and lovingly cultivated gardens are the introduction to John and Louise Mathers' Newforge House in Magheralin, Co Armagh. John is a trained chef and Louise is a great baker, so great food is a major

part of the attraction at this Blue Book property. Vegetables from the kitchen garden and locally reared meat are features of the three-course dinner menu, served Tuesday to Saturday (£44). The "tour of Ireland" cheeseboard is a highlight, with no fewer than 11 perfectly presented examples on offer when I visited. B&B single from £85/double £125

Newforge House, Magheralin, Co Armagh
0044-2892611255, newforgehouse.com

Ballymaloe House, Co Cork

Great food that comes from the 300-acre farm on the grounds of Ballymaloe House, along with locally sourced meat and fish, are at the heart of this enterprise. Dinner is a five-course affair, except on Sunday, when the Allen family serve a buffet of carved meats and seasonal salads, and the legendary Ballymaloe dessert trolley. Early risers can by arrangement join the daily breadmaking session, or head over to the cookery school to see what's bubbling in the new "bread shed", which is sending out superlative sourdoughs. B&B single from €200/double €250.

Ballymaloe House, Shanagarry,
Midleton, Co Cork
021-4652531, ballymaloe.ie

Marlfield House, Co Wexford

At the Bowe family's elegant country house hotel you can choose between old-school elegance, with dinner in the flower-filled conservatory overlooking the gardens and 40-acres of grounds, or a more casual supper in The Duck restaurant, cafe and bar. Whichever is your preference, your meal will feature vegetables and salads plucked from the kitchen garden just hours before. The menus promise wild salmon, spring lamb, Bannow Bay oysters, Wexford mussels and beef. Fish is a particular strength here. B&B from €105 per person sharing.

Marlfield House, Courtown Road, Gorey,
Co Wexford.
053-9421124, marlfieldhouse.com

Mount Juliet, Co Kilkenny

The Lady Helen – the Michelin-starred flagship restaurant at this golf and spa hotel – has been joined by a revamped offering, The Restaurant at Hunters Yard. Both are under the stewardship of executive chef Ken Harker, and Peter Culverhouse is



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head chef at the newcomer, which is an all-day, casual dining option. It's good to have the second option, but if it is food that has brought you here, you'll be donning the finery and taking your seat in the Lady Helen, where you can opt for two- or three-course table d'hôte, or the seven- or nine-course tasting menus. B&B in the manor house, from €195 per room. Mount Juliet Estate, Thomastown, Co Kilkenny. 056-7773000, mountjuliet.ie

Knockranny House Hotel

Knockranny's La Fougère restaurant has had a makeover, with the aim of maximis-

ing the dramatic views of Croagh Patrick and Clew Bay and executive chef Seamus Commons has been working on new dishes to fit with the revamp. A wild rabbit dish (most likely shot by Commons himself), features a broth, croquette and carrot. Turbot, shellfish, lobster and seaweed feature in another new composition. The bar-food menu is extensive; try the Kelly's black pudding cigars with green apple paste and celeriac remoulade. B&B single from €90/double €110.

Knockranny House Hotel, Westport, Co Mayo
098-28600, knockrannyhousehotel.ie

The Brook Lodge & Wells Spa, Co Wicklow

Ireland's only certified organic restaurant, The Strawberry Tree, is the food lover's draw at this rural retreat, which is also known for its use of wild and foraged foods. The hotel's full-time forager supplies its kitchens with seasonal ingredients, and if you ask nicely they'll show you around their walk-in wild foods pantry. They also run one-day wild-food masterclasses (€95, including lunch) and the next ones take place on June 13th, July 20th and August 15th. As well as The Strawberry Tree, BrookLodge also has an Italian-themed restaurant, La Taverna Armento, which sources ingredients from Basilicata in southern Italy. B&B from €130.

The BrookLodge & Wells Spa, Macreddin Village, Co Wicklow
0402-36444, brooklodge.com

Longueville House, Co Cork

A hotel that has its own farm, river frontage, kitchen garden and orchard has much to offer food lovers. This Georgian country house with its Turner conservatory is set in a 500-acre estate. Longueville House Cider is made on-site, with apples harvested from the 25-acre apple orchard, and a calvados-style apple brandy is also produced. William and Aisling O'Callaghan are both

trained hotel managers, and William, who also trained as a chef and worked with Raymond Blanc at Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons, presides over the hotel's Presidents' Restaurant. B&B single from €85/double €179.

Longueville House, Mallow, Co Cork
022-47156, longuevillehouse.ie

The Twelve, Co Galway

Wine lovers arriving at this hotel, just a few miles outside Galway city, are often excited by the scope and breadth of the wine list, lovingly cultivated by general manager and sommelier Fergus O'Halloran. But wine isn't the only beverage on offer here, you can now sample the hotel's own beer, Stout 1, developed by the bartenders and brewed by Trouble Brewing. The hotel's fine dining option, West, takes its inspiration from the surrounding landscape, and local ingredients also make their way into the Italian offering at Pizza Dozzina. There is a further casual dining option, The Pins gastro bar. B&B single from €90/double €100.

The Twelve, Barna, Galway
091-597000, thetwelvehotel.ie

Kelly's Resort Hotel & Spa, Co Wexford

Special-interest breaks, and full board – here that means, breakfast, lunch, afternoon tea, and dinner in a choice of restaurants, if you're able – are the attraction here. Next November, Gary O'Hanlon, of TV show *The Restaurant*, will be the guest chef for a special-interest cookery demonstration break, and there is also a wine-tasting break planned. On November 15th, proprietor Bill Kelly's "favourite chef", Denis



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Vinet from La Ferme de Victorine in the French Savoie, will cook for one night only at the hotel's La Marine bistro. B&B from €88 per person, no single supplement. Kelly's, Rosslare, Co Wexford 053-9132114, kellys.ie

– MARIE-CLAIRE DIGBY

City slickers

Bullitt Hotel, Belfast

The Bullitt Hotel opened in October and is named for the Steve McQueen movie. It's the hip, younger sister hotel to the more grown-up Merchant Hotel. DJs rock the Baltic Bar, and dinner in Taylor & Clay – where meat is cooked on an Asador grill – is good value. The cheapest “Dinky” rooms mean just that, though you can choose “Comfy” or “Roomy” for more space. Grab-and-go breakfasts are available if you leave the brown bag on the door handle. Prices per room are from €128 midweek and €151 at weekends. 40A Church Lane, Belfast 048-95900600, bullitthotel.com

GHotel, Galway

The G Hotel, which opened in 2005, is still a stylish spot if you're visiting the west. The Philip Treacy pink and bling has survived the test of time and comes out the other end as we enter an era of boom in Galway. The city is preparing for City of Culture 2020. The G is great for cocktails, comfy rooms and high-quality food. While in town, gin lovers will adore the recently opened Tigh Nora on Cross Street, where there are almost 100 gins to try. Midweek breaks with one dinner from €210pps, weekend breaks from €250pps. The G Hotel Old Dublin Road, Galway 091-865200, theghotel.ie

The River Lee, Cork

The stylish River Lee Hotel is part of the Doyle Collection and is a great base from which to explore the city. Sitting right on the river, it's flooded with light and has large, comfortable bedrooms. There's a very cool business centre, or if you're relaxing, a riverside terrace with good cocktails. Breakfasts are some of the best we've had in Ireland, and rooms start from €235. While you're in town, head for a drink at the new cocktail bar Casks on MacCurtain Street and explore some of the great pubs and music venues on the Cork pubs trail, corkheritagepubs.com. Rachel Allen's restaurant has opened on Washington Street and it has a piano bar for after-dinner fun (rachels.ie). River Lee Hotel, Western Road, Cork 021-4252700, doylecollection.com

Bishop's Gate Hotel, Derry

Bishop's Gate Hotel is a boutique 30-bed property in the centre of Derry. Lavish interiors and attention to detail make this a must-stay in Derry. Book the restaurant when you make a reservation; it is very popular. Explore the city of Derry with Martin McCrossan if you can get him, or one of his guides, great value for £4 (derrycity-tours.com). Rooms from €140 midweek and €187 weekends. 24 Bishop Street, Derry 0044-287114030 bishopsgatehotelderry.com

1 Pery Square, Limerick

This period townhouse sits on a beautiful square in Limerick's Georgian quarter, perfectly restored to reflect the era. Yet it is only a step from the buzz of Limerick city centre. Dinner in the Sash restaurant is a lovely country house experience, while the bedrooms include period rooms, club rooms and a top-floor townhouse suite overlooking the city and beyond to the mountains. Explore Limerick from St John's Castle to Thomond Park, or eat your way around the Milk Market. One-night stays are from €225 per room and



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€126.50pps with dinner.
1 Pery Square, Georgian Quarter,
Limerick,
061-402402, oneperysquare.com/rooms

—JOAN SCALES

More bang for your buck

RadissonBlu, Galway

For value you can't beat a swish hotel at a good price in a terrific location. And of course, being Galway, there's loads going on this summer for added value. Check in for the Arts Festival (July 17th-30th), the Film Fleadh (July 11th-16th) Race Week (July 31st -August 6th) or the Oyster & Seafood Festival (September 22nd-24th). The Galway Getaway package is a two-night stay with two breakfasts and one dinner, in either its Marina Grill or its top-floor Sushi restaurant, from €215 per person.
Lough Atalia Road, Galway
091-538300, radissonhotelgalway.com

The Savoy, Limerick

The Savoy is a hard name to live up to in the hotel business but Limerick's only five-star hotel is up to the task. This luxury boutique property is located in the 1930s cinema building that gives it its name, and it has the kind of polish and lustre one associates with silver screen movies of old. Though sleekly modern, it is resolutely old-school in terms of service levels and classic touches. Two nights in a junior suite, with prosecco and macarons on arrival, plus two dinners, from €199 per person.
The Savoy Hotel, Henry Street, Limerick
061-448700, savoylimerick.com

Kilkenny Hibernian

Great for girlie getaways; opt for a Suite Sleepover package and you'll get a night out and a night in. Start off with hot buttered popcorn, homemade marshmallows and a catch-up with movies on Netflix. Next day it's up and out before dinner and cocktails in its Harpers restaurant. Then dance the night away in a reserved VIP part of Morrisons Late Bar and Disco downstairs, where there'll be a chilled bottle of bubbly with your name on it. The hotel can organise everything from dance classes to whiskey tasting, with Suite Sleepover prices starting from €180 per person for two nights, based on two sharing.
Ormonde Street, Kilkenny
056-7771888, kilkennyhibernianhotel.com

Castle Durrow, Co Laois

Value is about meeting or exceeding expectations at a particular price point. Castle Durrow does this with unstuffy aplomb. Despite being one of the most beautiful hotels in the country, it won't leave your bank balance in need of five-star resuscitation. A two-night midweek summer special including B&B, a four-course evening meal, a guided tour with its head gardener and a complimentary discount card for Kildare Village for a total package price of €330. Result.
Castlevue, Durrow, Co Laois
057-8736555, castledurrow.com

Tinakilly House, Co Wicklow

For a classic Victorian country house experience, replete with afternoon tea, high tea (afternoon tea with Prosecco) and supper, Tinakilly is a little oasis of old-fashioned hospitality holding its own in a world of homogenised corporate hospitality. Two-night midweek specials including breakfast, and dinner for two on one of the



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nights, from €270, subject to availability. For the full added-value experience, fork out a little extra and stay in one of its four-poster suites.

Tinakilly, Rathnew, Co Wicklow
0404-69274, tinakilly.ie

Belleek Castle, Co Mayo

The quintessential romantic castle, this one is made all the more interesting because of the quirky nature of its contents. Not alone does it have a bar made with

wood salvaged from the Armada, but guests can enjoy the preoccupations of its owners down through the centuries. The result is a medieval castle with a nautical theme and its very own fossil museum – what’s not to love? Midweek dinner B&B rates this summer from €115 per person sharing, including breakfast and three-course dinner.

Garrankeel, Ballina, Co Mayo
096-22400, beleekcastle.com

Bush Hotel, Co Leitrim

Now in its fourth century in the hospitality business, the Bush Hotel sits on a three-acre site slap-bang in the middle of Carrick’s buzzing main street. The three-star property has family rooms sleeping five with game packs and DVDs for kids. Family-owned and proudly independent, it’s a great base for touring Lough Key, Arigna Mines or hiking the area’s ancient miners’ paths, and it counts Friday as part of its midweek packages. B&B from €65 a night.

Town centre, Carrick-on-Shannon,
Co Leitrim
071-9671000, bushhotel.com

The Lodge at Ashford Castle, Co Mayo

Its big brother might be on the “blow the budget” wish list, but this one offers a great value alternative, particularly if you’re looking to bring the kids for action and adventure on the same estate. Go zip-lining and tree-climbing, horse-riding or kayaking, before heading back to its Quay Bar and Brasserie for a family dinner, staying over in a luxurious Quay Suite. A two-night package for a family of four, including a full day’s bike hire and zip-lining, costs from €929.

Cong, Co Mayo
094-9545400, thelodgeac.com

Clifden Station House, Co Galway

This one’s a great option for summer holidays with up to three children staying complimentary B&B when they share with two adults. There is plenty to see in the area, from Omey Island and Cleggan to Connemara National Park and Kylemore Abbey. Or stay put and let the Railway Kids’ Club look after them before taking in a movie together in the hotel’s own cinema. A four-night B&B break with dinner on two evenings costs €680 per family of five in early June.

Clifden Station House, Connemara,
Co Galway
095-21699, clifdenstationhouse.com

Ballyvolane, Co Cork

Value is getting more bang for your buck and, when it comes to hotels, doing so in beautiful surrounds. Ballyvolane, a country house and home, ticks all those boxes. A two-night stay, B&B, plus four-course evening meal, guided canoe trip on the Blackwater and picnic lunch, costs from €660. Or bring down the bill a bit by booking one of



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its de-luxe bell tents and go glamping in style, at around €150 per night Ballyvolane House, Castlelyons, Fermoy, Co Cork
025-36349, ballyvolanehouse.ie

–SANDRA O'CONNELL

Island retreats

Dolphin Hotel, Inishbofin, Co. Galway

If birdwatching, hiking and swimming on remote, quiet beaches is your thing, then Dolphin Hotel on Inishbofin ticks so many boxes. The island is about 8km long by 5km wide. You can do your own thing, go hiking with an expert local guide or go on a birdwatching break run by the hotel: Owners Pat and Jackie are ornithological enthusiasts. I went swimming here at the beginning of the season in chilly water, and Jackie magically sourced me a wetsuit, a flask of tea and some cake. It's that sort of place. Weekend breaks from £119 per person sharing, for two-nights B&B and dinner. Inishbofin, Co Galway
095-45991, dolphinhotel.ie

Inchydoney Island Lodge and Spa, Clonakilty, west Cork

Given that there's a seawater pool, with seaweed wraps and massages, plus foraging for seaweed trips by kayak, it's Bladderwrack bliss here for seaweed enthusiasts. The hotel must have one of the most magnificent locations in Ireland, overlooking the sort of white strand you just have to take your socks off for. It has a surf school, and you can take your pick from myriad surf or turf delights for dinner, too. Seaweed soup is a regular on the menu. From €178 for two per night, including breakfast. Inchydoney Island, Clonakilty, west Cork
023-8833143, inchydoneyisland.com

Go Explore Hostel, Clare Island, Co Mayo

Rundown for years, this lively spot has been completely transformed by islander Carl O'Grady, who restored a derelict hotel into a hostel with six basic yet modern en-suite dorms and opened a wonderful restaurant and buzzing pub with plenty of music. The hostel has also partnered with Clare Island Adventures to get people climbing, coastering and generally clambering all over the island, really getting the lifeblood pumping round this stunning island again. Beds from €20 per person per night. Family rooms available. Go Explore Hostel, Clare Island, Westport, Co Mayo
098-26307, goexplorehostel.ie

Inishbeg, WestCork

Inishbeg is accessible by road bridge, but after that you can forget all about driving. Because this really is an island idyll, with boat-houses or wooden lodges to sleep in, stunning gardens to roam around, birdwatching to tweet about, and then, incongruously, a refurbished Roma caravan with an outdoor rolltop bath. It's all a bit barmy, but in the most beautiful way. Just to add to the magic, you can go on a night-time kayak on nearby Lough Hyne, then back to the island for a hot bath in the woods. Accommodation €50-425 per night. Inishbeg Estate, Baltimore, west Cork
028-21745

Inis Meáin Restaurant and Suites, Inis Meáin, Galway

This sublime-stone building – created by Ruairí and Marie-Thérèse de Blacam – has



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five elegantly understated suites, all with panoramic windows overlooking the island's maze of stone walls and the sea. Ruairi is chef, using all local ingredients, from periwinkles to lobster and homegrown veg that have an Atlantic, salty taste to them. Not surprisingly, it books out a year in advance. Sign up for their newsletter, which will remind you that bookings open in September, and then get in quick. It's pricey yet far from pretentious and worth every penny. Season is March to October, from €528 per suite for two-night stay. Inis Meáin, Co Galway.
post@inismeain.com or sign up at inismeain.com.



— CATHERINE MACK

Romantic

Hunters Hotel, Co Wicklow

Shiny, modern hotels are all well and good, but sometimes you want something with a little more history and charm – think open fires, cosy dinners and a snug bar where Daniel Day-Lewis and Steven Spielberg have been known to pull their own pints. Ireland's oldest coaching inn, Hunter's Hotel is just the place. It has been in the Gelletlie family for five generations and its creaky floorboards, chintzy chairs and open fireplaces feel a world away from the nearby M11 motorway. Request a room with your own fireplace in winter, and in summer sit outside in the abundant gardens and watch for kingfishers.

From €75 per person per night B&B.



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■ Top, Bishop's Gate Hotel, a boutique hotel in the heart of Derry city; above, the River Lee Hotel right on the river in the centre of Cork city



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■ Top, the La Fougère restaurant at Knockranny House Hotel, with views of Croagh Patrick and Clew Bay; above, the Ice House Hotel, also in Co Mayo; right, Longueville House, Co Cork, has its own farm



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■ Above, the boathouse at Inishbeg, Baltimore, west Cork, with kayaks on the lake and a bath in the woods



■ Kelly's Resort Hotel & Spa, Rosslare, Co Wexford, is starting special-interest breaks, and full board – breakfast, lunch, afternoon tea and dinner, if you're able

