



## Ballyfin Demesne



*Courtesy Ballyfin Demesne*

### At a Glance

An easy 90-minute drive from central Dublin into Kelly green pastures that have inspired songs throughout the ages brings you to a trim stone mansion and upon stepping into the driveway, your heel meets a blanket of gravel seemingly swept into order just for you—the perfect arrival at Ballyfin, a country estate where every detail has been considered. Sitting on 614 acres of woodlands, Ballyfin is rich in personality, evoking visions of balls, teatime rendezvous and hunts. The Neoclassical mansion is embellished with art and antiques, fireplaces surrounded by books, and textiles that beg to be touched. Despite the grandeur, there's an intimacy here, courtesy of the small number of rooms and the staff, many of whom have been here for years and are glad to share a story or two. The demesne's vast grounds make an afternoon walk or bike ride a light adventure, and there are plenty of ways to pass the hours thanks to the robust culinary, spa and outdoor programs. However, the true pursuit of Ballyfin is refined leisure.

**The Standout:** The collection of 19th-century costumes for a themed banquet in the

mansion

**Don't Miss:** A horse-drawn carriage ride, followed by a picnic lunch

## Indagare Loves

- The 20 mansion rooms and Gardener's Cottage, which are one-of-a-kind masterpieces with such details as 17th-century Flemish tapestries and gilded four-poster bed frames
- Activities, ranging from falconry and archery to whiskey tastings and spa treatments
- The ample farm-to-table meals

## Ballyfin Demesne Review

Just a 90-minute drive from the center of Dublin, Ballyfin Demesne is the perfect all-out retreat to complement time in the city for an experience that mixes urban energy with the transformative richness of the countryside.

Getting to Ballyfin is all about arriving in style. The Neoclassical country house sits in the middle of a grand estate that evokes Old World visions of elegant balls, sophisticated dinners, scenic walks and old-school hunts. Inside is all that you might expect from a hotel of this nature: gilded ceilings, imperial columns, domed skylights, large staircases, silk-covered walls, roaring fireplaces, dramatic artworks and fine upholstery.

The incredible staff, many of whom have been there for years, strive to pamper guests and make them feel immediately at home. In a hospitality landscape where "bare and modern" is trendy, Ballyfin provides an over-the-top escape that revels in its refined showiness and welcomes guests to indulge.

Despite this grandeur, there's an incredible intimacy at Ballyfin, thanks to its limited inventory of only 20 rooms. These spacious suites—each of which is decorated differently—take on the classic style of the rest of the house, where a medley of textures and patterns creates an almost historic backdrop to your stay. And the large windows in every room perfectly frame picturesque scenes of lakes, courtyards and gardens (and every room has a view of a water feature).

In July of 2018, the property introduced its first villa-style accommodation. The new Gardener's Cottage offers an especially private "home-away-from-home" experience, with all the amenities of staying on the grounds. Once the home of the estate gardener, the cottage was fully renovated to include a cozy sitting room with a fireplace, as well

as a kitchenette for morning coffee and a patio with a hot tub for relaxing after a day of riding or shooting. Upstairs, there is a spacious bedroom with “His” and “Hers” bathrooms, the latter of which is fully mirrored and features a chrome bathtub.

Best of all, the cottage provides lovely views and private access to the six acres of walled gardens that supply the Ballyfin kitchen with produce, as well as the freshly cut flowers that are placed in the rooms every day. Guests are welcome to tour the gardens solo, or they can enjoy the company of the head gardener.

Ballyfin’s all-inclusive program makes it difficult to leave the property, especially because there is plenty to do—from archery, shooting, falconry, horseback riding and golfing to more calming activities like a trip to the spa or a simple stroll around the grounds to marvel at the beauty of the Irish countryside. The property possesses over 600 acres to explore, and hidden grottoes, medieval castles, winding paths and varied wildlife make a trip on foot or by bike a magical adventure.

Meals, all of which are included, are almost entirely sourced from the property and its neighboring farms. The head chef, Sam Moody, displays this bounty in inventive and delicious ways.

## Who Should Stay

Couples or families with older children (nine and up) who are happy in a stylish, sophisticated setting (with top-notch service and access to Ireland’s lush natural beauty)

— *Elizabeth Harvey and Chadner Navarro*

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- *Indagare on November 5, 2014*

