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## LUXURY HOMES

Volume 3 | Issue 2

THE ULTIMATE  
SAGAPONACK  
RETREAT





# LUXURY ON THE EMERALD ISLE

By: Carly Dolan

**H**ome to rolling green hills and vibrant meadows, with stately homes dotted across the countryside, Ireland is a majestic and whimsical place to visit – as long as you don't mind a little rain. Despite its small size, the island in western Europe is teeming with lively entertainment, cozy pubs, regal castles, charming thatched cottages, rich history, and ancient folklore. Known as “Ireland of the Welcomes”, the very friendly country's unofficial motto is the Gaelic “Ceade Mile Fáilte”, which translates to “A Hundred Thousand Welcomes”.

From Riverdance and traditional music to luxury golfing and private dining in a cave, there are plenty of activities and entertainment on offer. Here are our top 10 choices when vacationing in the Emerald Isle.

## A Stay in a Castle

A luxury holiday in Ireland is not complete without visiting an Irish castle, but even better is having private access and treating it as your home for the duration of the stay. Visitors can have exclusive use of Castle Leslie from €10,000 (\$13,600) per day, which includes

all 20 bedrooms, breakfast and dinner. The castle is nestled in 1,000 acres of countryside, ancient woodlands and glistening lakes in County Monaghan – a beautiful rural county in the north of the Republic of Ireland. Find out more at [www.castleleslie.com](http://www.castleleslie.com).

## A Whiskey Escape

For Irish whiskey lovers, a tour on Ireland's only skippered luxury power yacht with a private whiskey tasting is a perfect way to spend a day. Luxury Yachting Ireland will take a private party of guests on Lough Derg, the largest lake on the River Shannon, with the country's official whiskey taster – who knows every one of the secrets and hidden stories of Ireland's famed drink. The yacht takes you amongst dense forests, rolling hills, scenic wetlands, and ancient ruins. Prices start from €195 (\$265) per person for a half day and €285 (\$390) for a full day, depending on number of guests. Visit [www.luxuryyachtingireland.com](http://www.luxuryyachtingireland.com) for more information.

## Dinner with Guinness

There is no better way to learn about Ireland's most famous drink than to dine at

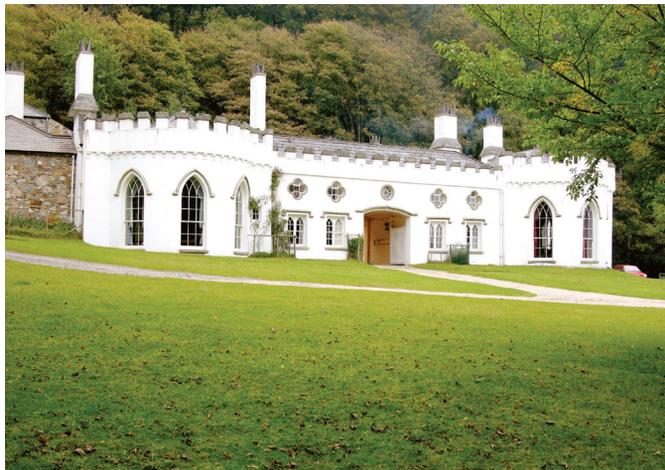
the Guinness' original home, Luggala Lodge, with a member of the family. For those who really love the Irish dry stout, there is also a Guinness Storehouse in Dublin where you can take a tour and see how the black stuff is made. A stay at Luggala Lodge costs €20,000 (\$27,200) per week. Visit [www.luggala.com](http://www.luggala.com) for more information. A private dinner with a Guinness family member can be arranged through luxury destination management company Ireland By Appointment ([www.irelandbyappointment.com](http://www.irelandbyappointment.com)), which specializes in bespoke holiday itineraries.

## Riverdance at Home

Ireland By Appointment is also able to can organize a private in-residence performance by the world-famous Riverdance troop of 40. The exhilarating show features traditional Irish dancing at its finest, and has thrilled audiences across the world. A 30-minute show at your personal accommodation will cost €6,000 (\$8,200).

## Dine in an Abbey

Glenstal Abbey is one of the most renowned and secluded abbeys in Ireland,



carved into the mountains in southwestern Limerick. The ancient abbey is set within a vast, 500-acre estate of enchanting lakes, winding streams, and woodland paths. The medieval landmark has never previously been open to visitors for dinner, but this can be organized through Ireland By Appointment with a large donation to the Benedictine monks.

#### **Golf with a Pro**

You couldn't leave Ireland without playing a round of golf or two, as it has some of the world's best links courses situated along the rugged Atlantic coastline in the west. The destination specialist Elegant Ireland ([www.elegant.ie](http://www.elegant.ie)) can organize rounds of golf with professional players and lessons in the finest golf resorts. Prices start from around €2,000 (\$2,700) per person, based on sharing for a three-day trip, but can increase dramatically depending on choice of accommodation, extras (such as bespoke lessons) and the time of year.

#### **A Top Chef Demo**

Agriculture is a major part of Ireland's economy, and the lush pasture means fresh

and delicious food. Gone are the days of stodgy Irish stews and cabbage and bacon, with exquisite dining now a major tourism drive. A private cookery demonstration by one of the country's top chefs can be organized by Elegant Ireland. The price varies depending on the chef, time of year and location, but usually runs into several thousand euros.

#### **A Day at the Races**

Horse racing is a large part of Irish culture and there are many courses and major race meets each year. The Irish Derby at the Curragh Race Course in County Kildare is the most prestigious, and is held in late June or early July. A private suite can be arranged for the day along with a meet and greet with some of the jockeys and trainers. The cost would start at €500 (\$680) per person based on a group of 10 people for the day. And for those clients that seek a truly absorbing experience at the races, Elegant Ireland is also able to assist in the purchase of your very own horse, meaning you're able to enter the VIP section as a "legitimate owner".

OPPOSITE PAGE, RIGHT: Castle Leslie

CLOCKWISE, ABOVE: Dinner with Guinness' at the Luggala Lodge, Play Golf with the Pros at the Waterville House, Whiskey Tasting via Luxury Yacht and The Irish Derby at the Curragh Race Course in County Kildare

#### **Meet an Artist**

For art enthusiasts, Elegant Ireland also organizes days with internationally-known Irish artist. This includes an art exhibition and the chance to discuss their artworks with the artist. Visit the EI website for full details.

#### **Head for the Hunt**

Ireland has a proud history of sporting tradition, and there are a number of private country houses offering access to migratory game wildfowl, including pheasants, snipe, and woodcock. A three-day hunt starts from €1,700 (\$2,300) per person, based on a minimum of eight in the group – plus insurance. Partners and non-shooters will cost an additional €550 (\$745). Get a quote for your trip at [www.hiddenireland.com/shooting](http://www.hiddenireland.com/shooting). ✈