



TRAVEL 2015



BY GEORGE KEEGAN

CASTLEMARTYR RESORT SHINES BRIGHTLY IN EAST CORK

It is always satisfactory when given good reports on a place you are visiting for the first time to discover all you read or heard is completely accurate- Castlemartyr Resort in East Cork really fits into that category. This 5* hotel/resort with 18 hole championship inland links golf course designed by Ron Kirby, is situated in the historical village of the same name on the N25 Cork to Dungarvan road, just 25mins from the city centre. The main hotel building is a classic 17th century manor house complete with Georgian windows and cut stone pillars. In the interior all the public areas are tastefully decorated and fitted with appropriate furnishings. The Knight's bar with a particularly high ceiling has impressive cornice mouldings which have been well maintained, and on the walls are original large oil paintings. The Resort is owned by a Co.Cork family who acquired it 20 years ago. Previous owners include Sir Walter Raleigh and Richard Boyle the first Earl of Cork. Among former guests of the hotel are the singer Bruce Springsteen, former US President Bill Clinton and golfer Graham McDowell, who uses the golf course from time to time to get in some practice.

Some years ago the owners built a large extension which includes extra bedrooms on two floors and is linked to the manor house by a state of the art Spa and fitness centre, plus a children's play room. The new building is not exactly pleasing to the eye from a distance and quite a long walk is required before guests reach the bedrooms, but the corridor linking the buildings is both bright and airy with views of the gardens and golf course. Staying today at the Castlemartyr Resort means a hotel, Spa with swimming pool, children's area, fitness centre and golf course all rolled into one - the perfect combination for a family break. In fact it gets even better,

Castlemartyr is not only pet friendly but has no less than 8 ground floor bedrooms (with small private gardens) where well trained dogs are allowed to overnight with their owners (other establishments please note).

Deluxe bedrooms in the modern wing have balcony access and are extremely comfortable and spacious. The Nespresso machines are a nice touch. These rooms also have an in -room touch panel on a bedside locker to control room lighting and open or close the motorised curtains - now that's luxury ! Bedrooms in the Manor House are also of a high standard. In this section guests can also choose from

suites with sauna and underfloor heating. On booking a stay a mobile concierge is sent by e-mail before arrival to enhance the experience and encourage requests regarding preferred dining times, booking the Spa or paying green fees for the golf course. All areas within the house have a restful ambience – particularly the Bell Tower restaurant, the resident's lounge (complete with library) and the Knights Bar with comfortable seating.

RESORT FACILITIES

Spa & Leisure Area – complimentary entrance for guests. An area offering 9 private treatment rooms, nail salon, fitness centre, ozone treated pool and separate sauna & steam rooms. Parents should note the swimming pool is open for children U16 from 10am to noon and 3pm- 6pm Monday to Sunday. At the entrance is a well stocked shop selling ESPA products (used in treatment rooms), plus a range of gifts including paintings & pottery by local artists. Anyone wishing to keep fit can use the spacious gym on the second floor overlooking the gardens with great views of the surrounding countryside.

Children's Play Room – lots of toys and puzzles to keep the little ones content. There is also a children's club.

A leisurely Walk - Meet up for a leisurely stroll with the Earl and Countess, two friendly resident Irish Setters who like nothing better than to go for a walk with guests. There are three estate walks all well marked (map is also available from reception). The Resort is set on 220 acres of mature parkland complete with picturesque lake and castle ruins dating from 1210.

Take A Bicycle Ride - guests can use a resort bicycle to cycle around the extensive grounds.

Carriage tours - book a private tour of the estate by either horse and carriage or pony and trap. Details at reception.

Castlemartyr is included in the Conde-Johansens 2015 guide to luxury hotels/Spas in UK/Europe, one of just 3 establishments selected in Ireland.

RESTAURANTS

Plenty of choice for guests;

The Bell Tower – an award winning restaurant serving breakfast and the famous Lady Fitzgerald's afternoon tea (daily). In the evenings guests select from the extensive A La Carte menu. Food is modern Irish cuisine using local seasonal produce. Recommended.

The Knights Bar – a very impressive large room with real log fire during the winter. All day menu. Fridays evenings there is traditional music and storytelling.

Franchini's – I didn't have a meal here but this restaurant offers a slightly more casual dining experience with emphasis on Italian food. Creative dishes of pasta, risotto and fresh pizzas are included on the extensive menu. This restaurant opened eighteen months ago and has proved such a success there are plans to extend.

The Pod - offers simple food but to the highest standards. Enjoy the panoramic views of the golf course from the club house. Outside decking in summer time.

SPECIAL OFFERS

STAY & PLAY – a package which includes an overnight stay with full breakfast, dinner and a round of golf for two from €270 per night per room. Note – book golf in advance.

SPA BREAKS - take a mid week break (Sun- Thurs) and enjoy one night accommodation with breakfast in the Bell Tower restaurant, a 3 course meal pp in Franchini's restaurant plus two 30min ESPA treatments pp and access to water lounge, sauna etc,. All from €391 per night (€420 Fri-Sat). To book click on www.castlemartyrresort.ie/spa-special-offers.

NOTE: The resort is a very popular venue, not surprisingly, for weddings because of the professional service offered and the great setting for those important photographs. There are also a number of self-catering cottages on the grounds.

ATTRACTIONS IN THE AREA

The Village –just a 10 minute walk from the Resort. Be sure to take the pathway around the lake to view the swans and other wildfowl. On arrival head for the excellent Village Greengrocer and Food Hall store. Homemade food at it's best. Either eat in or take out.

Farmgate Restaurant & Food Store in Midleton – began life in 1983 as a small food and veg shop and was expanded in 1988 to become the excellent restaurant, shop and patisserie it is today.

Jameson Whiskey Experience – located in Midleton and housed in an old distillery. Fascinating history of whiskey making. Tours available.

Cobh – Visit the Heritage Centre for the maritime history 'The Queenstown Story'. The town also has a memorial to the lost victims of the Lusitania tragedy.

Youghal - an Irish heritage town well worth visiting.

Fota Island Wildlife Park – see more than 60 animal species from all over the world, with many roaming free. Great place to bring the family.

Beaches – visit one of the fine beaches including Garryvoe which are close by. For information on regular train and bus services in the area enquire at reception.

Whether it's a short break or a longer stay a visit to Castlemartyr Resort can be highly recommended. For bookings and further details visit www.castlemartyrresort.ie

CORK CITY

Cork is a lovely small city with plenty to see and to do. When having a meal look no further than the really excellent Italian restaurant Ristrante Rossini. Situated on Princes Street this long established family business continues to produce superb authentic Italian food at reasonable prices. Choose from the large list of antipasti, pastas, risotto and speciality pizzas. There is also fresh fish of the day and to finish mouth watering deserts. The restaurant has a lovely warm atmosphere and in the evenings diners are entertained by an excellent pianist. Open 7 days for lunch or dinner. Tel 021 427 5818.

EVENTS COMING UP

The Cork Summer Show is held at Curraheen on 20th & 21st June and is one of the largest events of it's kind. In 2014 it attracted 50,000 visitors. The show is organised by the Munster Agricultural Society and has been running in some form since 1806. A great family day out. Visit www.corksummershow.com

USA TRAVEL NEWS BITES

MARYLAND: Book A Lodge In Maryland: If you fancy taking a late spring break in the USA then an 'Alternative Spring Break' with Purely Capital Region USA could be for you. They currently have a package staying at the Savage River Lodge located in a 700 acre state forest, offering privacy, serenity, relaxation, plus lots of outdoor activities. There are a total of 18 two storey private cabins to choose from equipped with all amenities including gas-log fireplaces. Choose from hiking, cycling, canoeing and horse riding. Another option is a 'chef for a day' programme working side by side with an executive chef preparing a personalised 4 course dinner. Prices quoted include 7 nights in a standard Queen cabin, return flights exLondon Heathrow to Baltimore Washington International airport with British Airways, plus 8 day car hire. Departures are from April to June 2015. To book visit www.PurelyCapitalRegionUSA.com. To find out more about Maryland click on www.capitalregionusa.co.uk

Family Holidays: America As You Like It - also has summer packages to Maryland suitable for families including return flights exLondon. Among the attractions are The National Aquarium in Baltimore, the lego Castle Adventure Exhibit at the Discovery Children's Museum, plus Ocean City comprising 10 miles of seaside fun. Click on www.americaasyoulikeit.com

TOUR OPERATOR OFFERS

Popular Camino Routes: Camino Ways.com who specialise on walking and cycling breaks along the famous Camino into Spain have issued a list of the most popular routes. By far the most popular is the 'The French Way'. This particular route has been featured in several films and books including 'The Way' starring Martin Sheen. It starts from St.Jean Pied de Port and then takes in 900km across the beautiful region of Northern Spain through the stunning hills of Galicia before finishing in the city of Santiago de Compostela. The second most popular route is known as 'The Portuguese way'. This starts in Lisbon and is perfect for nature lovers. In third place is 'The Northern Way' which starts in San Sebastian and follows the coast with stops in both Bilbao & Santander. In 2014 over 240,000 pilgrims trekked at least 100km of the Camino.

Also worth considering is 'The Finisterre Way' which is different in that it starts from Santiago de Compostela where the others end. This route is steeped in history and legends and finishes at what is known as 'The End of the World'. This cliff top area has a magical feel to it with really stunning views over the ocean. Traditionally pilgrims burned their clothes here before swimming in the sea on completion of their journey. CaminoWays.com organise treks all year round and prices include accommodation (on half-board basis), luggage transfers on route, a holiday pack with information plus a pilgrim passport. It doesn't include flights, transport or insurance. All details on www.caminoways.com

AIRSIDE UPDATES

Extra British Airways Flight: British Airways has announced it will add a 6th daily service between Dublin and London City Airport just six months after introducing the new route. Currently the airline has an aircraft based at Dublin overnight for the early morning departures, allowing business passengers to carry out a full day's work in London or connecting to some 29 domestic, European or International destinations from the docklands airport. During the month of June the extra weekday service will be in operation departing London at 14.40pm and returning from Dublin at 17.15pm. The service will then resume on a permanent basis from 1st September 2015. A 98 seater Embraer 190 aircraft will be used on the route. Full details from travel agents or click on www.ba.com

Summer Services From Dublin: A total of almost 2 million extra seats will be available from Dublin Airport for summer 2015 an increase of 11% in capacity from last year. In the next few weeks some 21 new routes/services are due to begin with sixteen short haul routes to Europe, five new long haul services to Washington, Chicago, Los Angeles, Addis Ababa & Halifax, plus Nova Scotia. New airlines using Dublin this summer include Ethiopian Airways (Addis Ababa- Dublin & Dublin- Los Angeles routes), Vueling (to Barcelona), WOW Air (to Reykjavik), Transavia (to Paris Orly), Europe Airpost (Paris & Halifax) and Finnair (to Helsinki).



**The Earl and Countess at Castlemartyr. (Pic courtesy
Castlemartyr Resort)**