

INTERIORS

Kim Kardashian stayed there on her honeymoon. Now five newly renovated bedrooms at Ballyfin Demesne make this old-world gem even more magnificent



It's hard not to feel like the lady of the manor at Ballyfin Demesne. Recently dubbed the 'grandest hotel in Ireland' by Conde Nast Traveller, this beautiful 18th century Laois manor was rightly declared the ultimate place to 'lord it up in style'.

Extravagance and grandeur is evident everywhere your eyes wander.

From a grand yellow salon heaving with oriental vases and trinkets to the 'ladies' gold drawing room bedecked with gilded loungers and richly patterned rugs that lie on magnificent parquet flooring said to even top that of Buckingham Palace, it's pure opulence.

Look up and you'll be blown away by the intricate stucco-work that crowns its ornately papered walls.

In the entrance hall, charming framed pictures and portraits hang alongside jewelled chandeliers. And floor-length windows give way to breathtaking views of a 28-acre man-made lake.

Kim Kardashian may have put the Downton Abbey-style manor in the limelight when she honeymooned there last May but it's the stunningly lavish, yet elegant, interiors that are the real star.

Purchased by Chicago electronics magnate Fred Krehbiel and his Irish wife Kay, the couple hired leading interior designer Colin Orchard as they embarked on an ambitious eight-year renovation. Painstakingly, they restored the late Georgian house from a crumbling boarding school to its former splendour when Sir Charles and Lady Caroline Coote owned it in the 1820s.

In March, the team opened five new bedrooms, bringing the hotel's offering to 20. Each new suite has its own distinctive personality.

Like the 'Chinoiserie' room where inky blue and charcoaled brown motifs sit out on a cream background, alongside select pieces of Oriental furniture and blending upholstery.

Or its neighbour the 'Garden room' where Colin joined forces with talented muralist Lucinda Oakes.

All the new rooms are decorated, as were their predecessors, with Irish art and antiques from around the world.

Majestic four-poster beds are dressed in sumptuous white linen and vibrantly coloured quilted blankets while inviting silk-lined robes await each guest.

But it's the playful pairing of mismatched prints and patterns throughout the interior scheme that steal the show.

They clash and certainly would not work in my little apartment, but in the spectacular high-ceilinged rooms of this stately home they live in harmony.

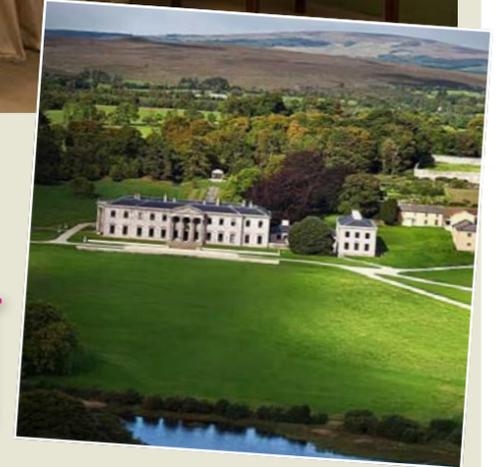
To echo the words of Lady Kildare in 1759: 'Yesterday I saw a most delightful place indeed, much beyond any place I have seen in Ireland - Ballyfin'.

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LORDING IT: The Trellis Deluxe Room has plenty of old world charm; below, inset, Ballyfin Demesne

SUITE LIFE AT BALLYFIN



ELEGANT: The sober and restrained Dr Beaufort State Room, decorated with Irish antiques



FEMININE: The Lady Kildare room pays tribute to one of Ballyfin's original admirers; inset, the Chinoiserie

GET THE LOOK...

Graceful additions that set right tone

PRICE OF ELEGANCE

1. Oriental vase, Harvey Norman, €25
2. Silver lotion dispenser, €16.99, TK Maxx
3. Blue cushions €15, Harvey Norman
4. Scroll mantel clock, Marks & Spencer, €75
5. Yoko footstool in teal, €398, Meadows & Byrne
6. Woollen throws, €90, Foxford Woollen Mills
7. Victoria rug, Marks & Spencer