

ATLANTA HOMES™ & LIFESTYLES

*joyful, happy
Color!*





PASSPORT

Escape to an authentic Swiss MOUNTAIN RETREAT, experience unmatched LUXURY BY THE WATER in Cabo and indulge in the elegant charm of an IRISH ESTATE.



top and bottom Ballyfin estate in Middle Ireland; guest suite goodness at Chileno Bay.



ELEGANT IRISH CHARMS

The Emerald Isle's country estates are polished and poised to welcome with old-world charm and new-world luxuries WRITTEN BY *Carolyn O'Neil*



Ashford Castle: From Fine Dining to Falconry

What's a country estate without a few sporting activities? At stately Ashford Castle—a member of The Leading Hotels of the World and set on the shores of Lough Corrib in southwest Ireland—guests may go fishing, take aim in archery, shoot at sporting clays or try their hand (safely cloaked in a leather glove) at falconry. Ashford Castle is home to Ireland's first school of falconry.

Dating to the 13th century, Ashford Castle, with its formal gardens, soaring turrets and stone towers, was the ancestral home of the Guinness family. Owner Beatrice Tollman of The Red Carnation Hotel Collection lovingly led a recent restoration, right down to the handmade silk tassels on the drapery. There are 82 sumptuous, antiques-filled

guest rooms and a luxurious, state-of-the-art spa.

Evenings at Ashford offer a choice to dress to the nines and dine in the elegant George V dining room, hide away in the cozy Dungeon restaurant, or sip and sup by candlelight in the wine cellar. After dinner, recline in the plush 30-seat cinema, savor cordials in the Billiards Room or sing along with live entertainment in the Drawing Room.

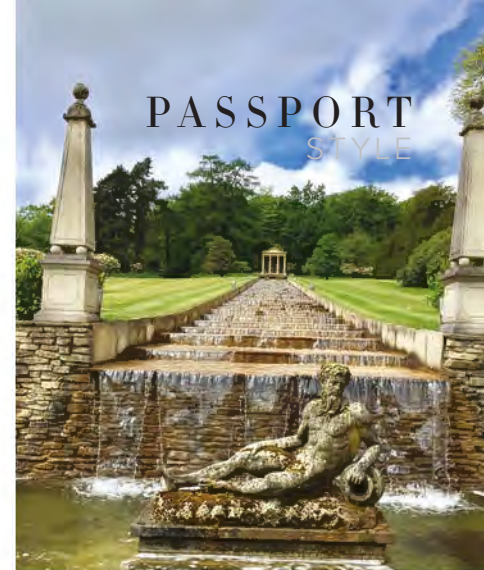
For a taste tour of Ireland, there's no need to leave your castle accommodations. Sample woodland mushroom soup or wild game terrine with plum gel and purple potato chips. A full Irish breakfast includes whole baked hams served from a splendid silver domed cart. Good thing there are 350 acres to explore before your next enchanting Irish meal. ashfordcastle.com

Ballyfin: An Irish Beauty

"It's a soft day," says Damien Bastiat, general manager of Ballyfin, an elegantly restored country house estate set on more than 600 acres in middle Ireland. Bastiat is leading a giddy golf cart tour through a gentle mist to explore Ballyfin's expansive landscaped grounds, including walled gardens, fern-filled woods, and a spin around the lake past the tennis courts and up the hill to climb a medieval-style tower built as a folly in the 1860s.

A member of Relais & Châteaux and Virtuoso, Ballyfin is an intimate hotel property with 20 uniquely appointed bedrooms. Step inside the neoclassical manor house, originally built in the 1820s, and step back in time for cocktails in the elegant Gold Drawing Room, or open a hidden door in the paneling and enter the spacious glass conservatory where lunch and tea are served. Guests can further enhance Old World fantasies by dressing for dinner in formalwear chosen from a collection of period costumes.

Ballyfin's kitchen garden boasts a gourmet grocery of vegetables, herbs and apple trees, and the garden-to-plate menu features Irish farmhouse cheeses, coastal seafood, free-range pork from nearby farms and fresh eggs from the estate. How about braised lamb with wild garlic, mint and peas for dinner, followed by an evening by the fire in the library sipping a rare Irish whiskey? ballyfin.com



top row, left to right Ballyfin is a lavishly restored Regency mansion. The spectacular cascade on the grounds at Ballyfin. *middle* The indoor swimming pool at Ballyfin. *below* No experience needed to fly your first Harris hawk at Ashford Castle's School of Falconry. *opposite, top to bottom* The Kennedy Suite overlooking Lough Corrib features Victorian antiques and nightly sherry service. One of 82 elegant rooms in the recently refurbished Ashford Castle.

