

# SWEET DREAMS

Chic country breaks, boozy afternoon tea and a sleep routine that really works.

**TOP TOME NOTES** Love your e-reader but miss that old book smell? You're not alone. An international team of chemists from University College London studied over 70 books to try and break down what creates that unmistakable scent. Their conclusion? "A combination of grassy notes with a tang of acids and a hint of vanilla over an underlying mustiness. The smell is as much a part of the book as its contents, so it's no surprise that there are a growing number of products trying to capture that heady aroma. Recreate it at home with the Bibliothèque candle, €55, from Stockholm-based fragrance house Byredo, 0046 852 5026; byredo.com.



## HIP HAPPENINGS

**WHAT** Gin is the thing right now, and if you're a fan of the tippie, you'll love **Faithlegg House Hotel's Hendrick's Gin and Spa Day**. Keenly priced at €75 per person, it includes a boozy afternoon tea (where you'll get stuck into sticky buns and sip your Hendrick's from teapots) as well as a spa treatment of your choice. A great girly getaway in the sunny South East.

**WHEN** Monday-Sunday

**WHERE** Faithlegg, Co Waterford, 051 382 000; faithlegg.com.

**WHAT** **Trail Kilkenny** runs again this autumn, but it's not all about the food. There are scenic walking, cycling and craft trails that offer the perfect opportunity to get away from it all.

**WHEN** August-November, trailkilkenny.ie;

**WHERE** The trails take place all over Kilkenny, but for a truly chilled escape, base yourself in the beautiful 17th century surrounds of Lyrath Estate, and top things off with a restorative Turkish Bath Scrub in the Oasis Spa, €90, 056 776 0088; lyrath.com

**24 HOURS IN ... Ballyfin House** Approaching Ballyfin House on the long, winding driveway through the demesne, we were bowled over by the size and variability of the land, eventually catching sight of the mansion itself, which looks down over its own lake. Greeted warmly by the mostly local staff at the door, we were welcomed inside and shown to our room, which featured the most beautiful four-poster bed I've ever seen.

After a flawless, delicious lunch, we quickly freshened up and left to explore the area with one of the freely available golf buggies, visiting the rose garden, archery butts, fernery, climbing the Famine-era tower that looks over all 600 acres and finally taking a rowing boat out onto the lake, gliding through lily pads.

After a leisurely swim in the pool came dinner, which was absolutely incredible – a tasting menu with kitchen garden-grown vegetable salad, beef tartare, line-caught brill, lamb and a chocolate mille-feuille, which was the sort of dessert that makes you close your eyes and savour each bite.

There's a house tour at 4pm every day, given by a member of staff who attended the Patrician Brothers school, which occupied the property for over 70 years before being sold in 2002. Our guide took us through the house and the nine-year restoration process, during which it became clear that the project is a labour of love, not profit, with a focus on recreating the great hospitable tradition, luxury and atmosphere of the Irish country house. Ben Keenan

Suites from €475 per night, full board included. Ballyfin, Co Laois, 057 875 5866; ballyfin.com.