

# Condé Nast Traveller

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## Back to the old school

**IRELAND** A Regency mansion has been restored to its former glory and reborn as an all-out-luxury country-house hotel

Given its recent economic woes, Ireland may seem an unlikely spot to open what is set to become one of Europe's most luxurious new hotels. But **Ballyfin** is hoping to buck the trend. Its American-Irish owners scoured the country for the ideal restoration project before settling on this sprawling, Regency mansion set on a 600-acre demesne deep in the velvety green countryside of County Laois, an hour and a half from Dublin. The house was the former country seat of a succession of wealthy families, including the Duke of Wellington's, the Wellesley-Poles; and with just 13 bedrooms and two suites, it retains the feel of a magnificent rural estate, but offers all the benefits and privacy of a hotel. The newly twinkling chandeliers and splendidly classic style (four-poster beds and fine antiques) are a far cry from the breezy dormitories of another of its previous incarnations, as a boys' boarding school.

**Clockwise from top left: the conservatory; the Gold Drawing Room; the 28-acre lake; Lady Caroline Coothe Room**

**AOIFE O'RIORDAIN**

Ballyfin Demesne, County Laois, Ireland (00 353 5787 55866; [www.ballyfin.com](http://www.ballyfin.com)). Doubles from €950, full board



Scandinavian brand **URBANEARS** aims to make listening to music on the move as much of a style choice as the watch you wear or the bag you carry. Its four different styles of headphone - *Plattan* (pictured), *Tanto* (1980s Walkman style), *Bagis* and *Medis* (both in-ear) - come in a wide range of colours which changes twice a year to reflect seasonal fashion trends.

All models have a remote control feature and are microphone compatible with all PDAs. From £34.99; [www.urbanears.com](http://www.urbanears.com)

## THINK BIG

See this

Built in 1900 for Paris's second Universal Exhibition, the **Grand Palais** has played host to everything from showjumping to Chanel fashion shows. Since 2007 it has also been the home of the annual **Monumenta**, in which an artist takes on the challenge of exhibiting in the 13,500-square-metre space. Following installations by Anselm Kiefer (a collapsing house), Richard Serra (towering sheets of rusted steel) and Christian Boltanski (a mountain and fields of old clothes), the honour for the fourth edition falls to British artist **Anish Kapoor**, a master of the grand scale.

LISA JOHNSON

13 May-20 June  
(00 33 1 44 13 17 17;  
[www.grandpalais.fr](http://www.grandpalais.fr))

