

THE GLOSS

MAGAZINE

PROJECT SUMMER: Five Stars for Summer

Irish holiday experiences are about marrying pastime and location:
we pick some of our favourites

Last year was the first year we can remember that we weren't reminiscing over long-gone, hotter, longer summers. This year has a lot to live up to, but this selection of Irish places to stay and things to do work in the hail, rain or - hopefully - shine. This isn't a roll-call of five-star bedrooms. Although we love

the polished grand central station buzz of The Shelbourne or kicking back with a fat red wine by the fire amid some of the country's finest art in The Merrion, this list isn't about those five-star landmarks. It's about experiences that can only happen here in Ireland, and proper bases from which to enjoy them.

1. KICKING BACK

AT **KNOCKRANNY** HOUSE HOTEL,
WESTPORT, CO MAYO

Stay in the courtyard rooms (left) and you have a four-star experience that can outbox most five stars anywhere, with Seamus Commons' food, the massive rooms, chintzy but super spa, great house coffee and impeccable cocktails. With giant wraparound widescreen windows showing the different seasons of **CROAGH PATRICK** on the hour, it's beautiful when it's beautiful, but it's even better when it's wilder. There's something special about sitting at breakfast having your Kelly's black pudding, tiny potato cakes and a supernova egg with the papers while looking out at the mayhem in the clouds. 098 28600, www.knockrannyhousehotel.ie.



2. DAWDLING

IN BALLYCOTTON, CO CORK

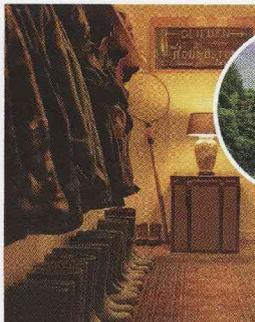
Ireland's actual food capital - the best of what we produce and the best places to eat it - is firmly anchored between west Waterford and East Cork with a few "Ballys" in between. Starting from Ballyvolane (stopping in **MC GRATH'S** for the best spiced beef in the country's most handsome village Lismore), down to the **TANNERY** (right) in Dungarvan, the starred **CLIFF HOUSE** in Ardmore, the twelve-mile menu at **SAGE** in Midleton, back through **BALLYMALOE** and finishing with a pint and some trad in the **BLACKBIRD** in Ballycotton before some sunset seafood, sea air and sea-lulled sleep just feet from the waves in the **BAYVIEW HOTEL** (above) in the most gorgeous corner of the country. 021 464 6746, www.thebayviewhotel.com.



3. FLY FISHING

AT BALLYNAHINCH CASTLE,
CONNEMARA, CO GALWAY

You might like to get your picture up on the walls with the photographs of beaming fishermen and their huge catches in the big, ramshackle, time-capsule Ballynahinch has a wooded stretch of river and the backdrop of the **TWELVE BENS** making the perfect Connemara fairytale, make-believe landscape. 095 31006, www.ballynahinch-castle.com.



4. EATING

AT TANKARDSTOWN, SLANE, CO MEATH

Robbie Krawczyk, who honed his rep at the much-missed Chop House in Lismore, has recently taken over at **BRABAZON**, the restaurant (left) at Tankardstown, and is using every inch of the estate's kitchen gardens to bring the food on par with every other detail. The best time to go is on a cheeky day off when you can stay and dine on a school night. Tankardstown's owner Trish Conroy has single-handedly improved the whole aesthetic of Slane. Her cute bakery, **SLANE BAKE**, and Tankardstown's little sister, the dinky **CONYNGHAM ARMS**, (below left) with its mini-Parisian boudoir rooms, animate the village again in a way that was sadly lacking. Staying at Tankardstown, the Conyngham Arms or lovely **ROSSNAREE** and dining at Brabazon before flying out of Terminal 2 on holidays is an unbeatable experience too. 041 982 4621, www.tankardstown.ie.



5. SELF-CATERING

AT BALLYPORTRY CASTLE, THE BURREN, CO CLARE

Self-catering in a 500-year-old castle may sound a bit draughty, but not when it's been meticulously restored with under-floor heating along with turf-burning stoves, sheepskin rugs and more good books than you could read in a year. Ballyportry Castle is a dramatic tower house rising out of the moonscape of the **BURREN** like a monolith. On six floors within craggy limestone walls, furnished with linen sheets and wool blankets, you can batten down the hatches with a group of friends, order good local cheeses and meats, stock the fridges and shelves and make like the medievals. The castle sleeps up to eight and the chef can cook for you all and will stack the dishwasher too. Take day trips out into your kingdom - throw yourself into the ocean at **LAHINCH**, have a long lunch of Aidan McGrath's great cooking in **WILD HONEY INN**, stock up on smellies at the **BURREN PERFUMERY**, then amble back to the castle for drinks in the rooftop hammocks as the sun goes down. 01 660 9038, www.ballyportry.ie.



ADDRESS BOOK: **The Tannery Restaurant**, 10 Quay Street, Dungarvan, Co Waterford; 058 45420, www.tannery.ie. **The Cliff House Hotel**, Middle Road, Ardmore, Co Waterford; 024 87800, www.theciffhousehotel.com. **Sage Restaurant**, The Courtyard, Main Street, Midleton, Co Cork; 021 463 9682, www.sagerestaurant.ie. **Ballymaloe House**, Shanagarry, Midleton, Co Cork; 021 465 2531, www.ballymaloe.ie. **Blackbird Ballycotton**, Main Street, Ballycotton, Co Cork; 086 850 2383, www.blackbirdballycotton.com. **Slane Bake**, Main Street, Slane, Co Meath; 041 988 4716. **Conyngham Arms**, Main Street, Slane, Co Meath; 041 988 4444, www.conynghamarms.ie. **Rossnaree House**, Slane, Co Meath; 041 982 0975, www.rossnaree.ie. **Wild Honey Inn**, Kincora Road, Lisdoonvarna, Co Clare; 065 707 4300, www.wildhoneyinn.com. **The Burren Perfumery**, Carron, Co. Clare; 065 708 9102, www.burrenperfumery.com.