Private bankers say their Silicon Valley clients invest very differently from the rest of the country. To offset large stakes in their own companies, U.S. tech moguls plow loads of money into venture capital, timberland, farmland, and municipal bonds. Inside, a full report.

Why Even the Getty Needs to Raise Money
Page 72

Hotel Residences: Luxury at a Price
Page 41

Best Watches For Collectors
Page 17
Irish Hospitality
Top-flight hotels on the Emerald Isle offer unusually good buys

By Richard C. Morais

Some of the best hotel values in the world can currently be found in Ireland. I came to this conclusion while sipping a massive tub, a glass of ruby-red wine at my elbow, and an alarmingly lavish Irish stew downing at me from a mural on the wall. Outside the airy bathroom’s Georgian window, an early evening mist was rolling into the court of the five-star Ballyfin Demense, a 15-bedroom hotel that opened three years ago in County Laois, and is now on my personal short-list of top hotels in the world.

It’s a deliciously quiet reserve, an hour-and-a-half drive from Dublin’s airport, for those who crave architectural beauty and fine food. After booking my single room for 88 euros ($117), meals included, I drove in late March through the hotel’s sliding metal gates, and into the 600-acre estate, passing grassy hillocks, a family chapel, and a lake. The neoclassical great house with columns, built in the 1820s by the aristocratic Coote family, appeared suddenly alongside the lake like a miniature Bridgeland in gray stone.

The hotel manager, slightly out of breath from running somewhere, stood waiting at the stone-and-gravel entrance with her head of housekeeping, the head porter, and his second, all smartly turned up in row to welcome me to Ballyfin. This bit of theater transparently mimicked how the Enniscorthy Abbey staff greets the fictional Lord Grantham, and I was deeply embarrassed by the ritual, but also slightly pleased.

The Protestant Coote family, Elizabethan adventurers who came to Ireland in 1601 and were granted land for their soldiering efforts, sold Ballyfin in 1929 for 10,000 Irish pounds to the Patriarch Brothers, a Catholic teaching order that ran the house into the ground as a boarding school. But in 2002, the Chicago billionaire Fredrobe bought the dilapidated estate with his wife and spent nine years painstakingly restoring Ballyfin to its full Regency splendor, reportedly at a cost of $20 million.

The smell of a pot fire filled the foyer, which featured a mosaic floor that had been imported from Italy in 1822. After checking in at an antique partner’s desk, I was escorted to the staircase hall, where Tiffany-blue walls were covered in 18th and 19th century portraits of Coote ancestors bedecked in velvet and lace.

My first-floor Tapestry Room was a small suite with fireplace and sumptuous bath; it was formerly Charles Coote’s dressing room, sandwiched between his and his wife’s bedchamber, perhaps explaining the glistening in Pan’s eye. The walls surrounding the four-poster bed were completely covered in very fine gray-and-blue tapestries.

The head of housekeeping whisked away my soiled laundry; it returned in a few hours cleaned, ironed, tissue-wrapped, and smelling of heather sprigs. That afternoon, I jogged around the pike-filled lake, past a faux 19th century grotto, hives of bees making breakfast honey, and a masquerade for a Coote, alone in a field. A workout in the gym

The cozy living room in the 15-bedroom, five-star Ballyfin in County Laois. A prepared Champagne was served in the library, while the wine list served up a history lesson on Irish winemakers in 18th century France.

This image contains a link to an article on Irish Hospitality. The article discusses the unique charm and beauty of Irish hotels, specifically the Ballyfin Demense in County Laois. The author describes the hotel's architecture, the peacefulness of the surroundings, and the delicious food and service provided. The article highlights the history of the Coote family and their contribution to the hotel's restoration, emphasizing the attention to detail and the luxurious atmosphere created. The text also touches on the personal experience of the author, sharing insights into the unique elements of the hotel that make it a special destination. The article is accompanied by a photograph of the cozy living room in the hotel, with a prepared Champagne and a wine list that offers a historical lesson on Irish winemaking. The overall content is rich with sensory details, creating a vivid picture of the hotel's charm and elegance.
near the indoor pool was followed by a massage; the masseuse was too chatty and aggressive.

But the massage finale was peppermint tea served in a silver urn up in my room, alongside a cube of carrot cake. I completed my restorative regime with a hot bath: "Greenlochoway" and "Peter & the Wolf" were piped in via overhead speakers, while sea salts and peppermintatin the bathroom. Through the window, I watched the day's glowering roll in, distinctly observed from my perch in the tub.

Champagne served in the library. Dark green scagliola columns divided the room, and I took my Champagne flute over to a red armchair where I leaned through a gorgeous coffee-table book about the Irish countryside, armchair by the bookcase legend: "Consider it the oldest sin, to steal a book from Ballyfin."

Sumptuous to my table in the dining room, I startled out a tall Palladian window with water cascading and gurgling down stone tumbrels from a Caedonian temple up on the grayest hill. Around me, the dining room: firepluse, Chinese vases, a Gainsborough-style canvas of a mother and daughter. The other guests were mostly well-heeled Dubliners lured by chef Ryan Murphy, a New Yorker who had once been sous-chef at Jean-Georges. Last year, hotel critic Andrew Harper made the Ballyfin dining room his "hotel restaurant of the year."

The starter was an accident involving beetroot and carrots, overdressed and drenched with sauce. But the pan-fried turf-whether cooked in mustardy carrot, leek, and grilled fennel—was delicious. Afterward, I swooned over a local blue

Balynyski's County Clare abode, and a spread up of its own culinary colors. The menu examined the placid Arts articles, the lifestyle of the farm-to-table movement in the US. A redundant of a Gorgonzola dolce, and a sheep's choice with a robust caramel-like flavor suggestive of the brown Norwegian goat's cheese, goat's cheese.

Another example of Ballyfin's clever attention to detail was found on the wine list. Many Irish Cavolo, known as "wild goose," went into exile, rather than stay in British-dominated Ireland in the 17th and 18th centuries. Some settled in Basque, France, and became winemakers. When Thomas Jefferson was in Bordeaux in 1787, writing to advise George Washington on his cellar, he noted that the top local winemakers were called "German, Barton, Johnston, Forster, Skinner, Cogin, and McCarthn." The Ballyfin wine list is an homage to these wild-goose winemakers and that night I became very familiar with the product of Anthony Barton.

In between dinner and coffee, I left my table, and soon wanted to move into the mesh tea. The relief room has a fireplace, rugs, Kugathian works by Thomas Berrigan, and fantastic murals with green-glass splash guards to protect feet. Next day—after a brisk walk, shooting, and a breakfast of hot Irish oats and homemade honey—"I paid my GBM ($110) bill. Compare that with, say, the Four Seasons in Scottsdale, Ariz., where you bought a room with a spa package, during the same travel dates in 2015, costs $994.90 a night—

Kardashian spent their trip in a May's honeycomb at Ballyfin, drawing attention to the hotel.

Also a bargain is Ballymacke House, an Irish country hotel in the southern coast, near the picturesque port village of Ballyvourney. The Laura Ashley-like decor at Ballymacke is pleasant and yet nothing to write home about. But Ballymacke also sits in a 100-acre organic farm, and it's the hotel's dining room and cooking school that especially comes into play from around the world. The depose of the American farm-to-table movement, Alice Waters of Chez Panisse, regularly comes to Ballymacke to celebrate her birthday. Three generations of the Allen family, including the acclaimed chef Darina Allen who made the hotel's kitchen famous, run Ballymacke.

My large room was off the courtyard, and I had a tight bunch of hives with bees, as busy as the sea. I was attending a friend's birthday, and we dined one night at a buffet of fresh sea urchins from the bay. Goodness, tiny peppers filled with orange eggs, raw eel and oysters, a delicate lobster pin, a leg of lamb roasted with a stuffing of Fuy Seigo, shredded savoy cabbage, and a cracking-covered side of roast pork. There was even a creamy pudding made from seaweed.

This is an inn for people who really know and love food. My room cost €195 a night; the buffet, €70 per head. It was yet another example of the Irish value buy.