Get the the royal treatment in **Ireland**'s most glam getaways

Shamrock Star



Bono of U2



Top: Dromoland Castle at dusk. Above: Dromoland's pony and jarvey are available to guests, weather permitting.

It's not every day you extend your arm and a yellow-beaked, broad-winged falcon lands on it, but then again, it's not every day you find yourself at the five-star **Dromoland Castle** in County Clare, Ireland.

A stay at the neogothic castle transports you to another time, when lords and ladies ruled the manor. From the moment you walk past a suit of armor to the reception desk, you feel as important as the many VIP guests who've discovered Dromoland's charms, from **Bill Clinton** and **George W. Bush** to **Nelson Mandela**, **Richard Branson** and **Bono**. In fact, when the rock star's flight to the U.K. made an emergency landing in Ireland because of inclement weather during the winter of 2012, he insisted on staying at Dromoland. Though the castle was closed for the holiday, general manager Mark Nolin, who's been with the property for 25 years, sprang into action, calling employees at home and grabbing some hearty dishes his wife had prepared for the holiday to bring Bono and his crew. (Irish lore has it that Nolin spent the evening jamming with the U2 frontman.)

BONO: LUCA TEUCHMANN/GETTY IMAGES FOR KRYOLAN







Clockwise from top left: Dromoland's school of falconry, Earl of Thomond formal restaurant and Club House library.

RAISING YOUR EIRE

Completed in 1835 and built entirely of limestone, the building itself is rich in historical significance. It was the ancestral home of the O'Briens, one of the few native Gaelic families of royal blood. Now the 450-acre facility plays host to weddings, family reunions, business travelers and those looking to explore the rural County Clare region. The area is known for its quaint gastropubs and shops such as **Burren Smoke House**, where you can sample salmon smoked on the premises, and **Burren Perfumery,** specializing in seasonal scents, handmade soaps and skincare products.

County Clare also has several local attractions worth checking out. The most breathtaking—and a bargain at just 10 euros—is the three-hour **Doolin Cliff Walk Tour**, led by local farmer Pat Sweeney. An expert on local history and folklore, Sweeney had the idea to create the paved path along the sea cliffs back in 2007, and he was instrumental in convincing other local farmers to donate a portion of their land for the path that stretches for nearly five miles.

The region also has plenty of activities for animal lovers. You can watch border collies tell the sheep who's boss at the **Cahercon-nell Sheep Dog Demonstration** or tour the picturesque village of **Quin** on horseback (try **Ballyhannon House**).

PROPERTY VALUE

With all there is to do at Dromoland Castle itself—a first-rate 18-hole golf course, a tranquil spa, clay shooting, fishing, archery and a school of falconry that houses numerous birds and exotic owls—many visitors are perfectly content staying put on the property.

As for dining options, Dromoland has plenty. Chef David McCann oversees the cuisine at the property's formal restaurant, the **Earl of Thomond**, which serves a Dover sole with mushrooms that is bar none, as well as the more casual **Fig Tree** near the golf course. There's also a drawing room that's perfect for enjoying Mrs. White's Afternoon Tea (complete with an ever-changing array of pastries, finger sandwiches and teas), as well as a pub outfitted with a roaring fireplace and a collection of the ceramic dog statuettes traditionally given as wedding gifts in Ireland.

Dromoland is one castle where you're treated like royalty—no matter what your lineage. *dromoland.ie — by Michele Shapiro*



Aidan Quinn, *Elementary*

QUINN: JEFF NEIRA/CBS

IRISH SPIRIT

Elementary star **Aidan Quinn** has roots in the town of Birr, County Offaly, Ireland, and later moved back and forth between Dublin and Chicago. In Ireland, Quinn produced and starred in *This Is My Father*, a movie written and directed by his brother Paul and filmed by his brother Declan, an award-winning cinematographer. He also made the films *Evelyn, Song for a Raggy Boy, 32A* and *Shine of Rainbows* in Ireland.