

RTÉ GUIDE



TRAVEL

A Royal county mix of activity & relaxation

Still shiny from its refurbishment, Dunboyne Castle Hotel in Co Meath gave **Janice Butler** just the right combination of luxurious relaxation and entertaining outdoor activity – a perfect weekend!

When I was asked to come visit Dunboyne Castle Hotel for an outdoor activity weekend, I jumped at the chance, especially when they told me archery would be involved (turns out I was shockingly bad at it!). I had been to Dunboyne Castle once before, many years ago for a friend's wedding, but this was a very different experience. The first thing I noticed on arrival – the hotel is just 30 minutes from the city centre and easily accessible from the country's motorways: one couple who had come from Galway said their trip had been 'stress-free' – was that the property has been updated and upgraded in the ten years since I'd been there.

After lunch on arrival, the group was ushered outside, where two activities were set up for us by corporate team-building company, Dynamic Events. The first was falconry (a new one on me) with the highly enthusiastic Bernard, who introduced us to an amazing collection of birds of prey. It included demonstrations and hands-on experience with trained Harris hawks, peregrines and eagle owls. Then it was onto a spot of archery, where we were divided into teams for a battle to the end – it's harder than it looks! After an afternoon of playing Robin Hood we had time to relax in the stunning spa facilities – the highlight being the outdoor Jacuzzi.

That night we were treated to dinner in the hotel's Ivy restaurant and it was one of the best meals I've ever had in a hotel restaurant in Ireland. The publicist said the hotel is proud of its food but it's not something

they want to shout about, instead allowing guests to be blown away when they dine there. We certainly were. Head chef John Nagle has created a wonderful menu, with quail, crab or veal carpaccio to start and guinea fowl, venison and brill for the main courses. All produce is locally sourced and the waiting staff know the elements of each dish perfectly. A meal in the Ivy is reason enough to visit Dunboyne Castle Hotel.

This weekend activity collaboration between Dunboyne Castle and Dynamic Events is perfect if you're planning a getaway for a group and want something a bit different. From archery to air rifles, falconry, Gaelic games, Celtic challenges, quad biking, grass karts, team challenges and a crystal maze, they pretty much have everything covered. Groups from ten to 100 can be accommodated, with the cost depending on the number of activities included and the amount of time spent per session. With room rates from €130 on a B&B basis (€65 per person sharing), activities from the thrill of the bow and arrow with the very latest archery equipment to exhilarating falconry demonstrations or multi-event team Olympics, cost from €55 per person (minimum of ten guests).
For events, contact Dunboyne Castle Hotel & Spa at events@dunboyncastlehotel.com. Dunboyne Castle Hotel & Spa Dunboyne, Co Meath 01-801 3500, dunboyncastlehotel.com.

