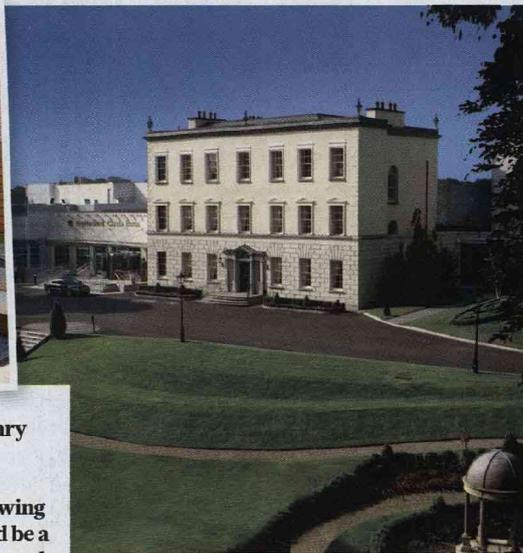
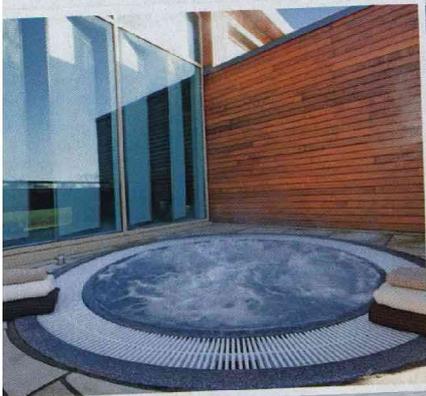




Fit for a queen

Noëlle Kelly discovers the joy of an overnight break at Co Meath's **Dunboyne Castle Hotel**



It was a cold, drizzly Saturday in February and I was lucky to be heading for an overnight break with my husband to **Dunboyne Castle Hotel**. Really not knowing what to expect, I was hoping that it would be a relaxing treat for us as we've had a busy couple of months.

The hotel itself dates back to 1764 and is close to all amenities. It's a six-minute walk from Dunboyne town centre and a 13-minute walk from the train station.

A lovely, sloping driveway leads up to the old castle which has been carefully preserved. The new part of the hotel has been very tastefully built around the old castle.

We had afternoon tea booked for four o'clock. I haven't had afternoon tea in years. I think the last time was almost a decade ago, so I was looking forward to it. We were served in the drawing room of the old house – a really elegant room full of old charm. With glasses of bubbly in hand (aah, you would have to, wouldn't you?) we tucked into a spread of finger sandwiches, scones, jam and cream and a petit selection of pastries that were to die for. It was a wonderful way to spend an afternoon.

Dinner was for eight o'clock in the Ivy Restaurant, which has two AA Rosettes (2013–2016) for their culinary excellence.

The food is delicious with a selection of modern Irish and international cuisine and the atmosphere is very enjoyable.

I had scallops and they were divine, as was the foie gras. We each opted for the beef fillet for our main course – otherwise we both would have had food envy at each other's plates. Dessert was a mango and lime brioche pudding (heavenly) with a cheese board to finish.

I do have to say our server was outstanding. She watched over us, ensuring that we had the space to eat, but also just in reach in case we needed anything like an extra glass of wine.

After dinner, I felt like I couldn't have eaten again, but after a good night's sleep we had a hearty breakfast and then it was off to the Seoid Spa to test out the facilities.

The spa has a very tranquil setting. We relaxed in the hydrotherapy pool and enjoyed the outside jacuzzi and sauna. It was the perfect way to start the day.

I had booked in for a peppermint and seaweed sugar glow skin scrub. This is a perfect way to get your skin ready for spring. My skin was in need of some emergency treatment as it had been neglected all winter.

The treatment itself uses natural ingredients to invigorate and exfoliate and while the treatment was doing its work, my therapist gave me a head massage – I drifted off to sleep. Once the exfoliator was washed off, my skin was moisturised in order to give it some much-needed nourishment. To say I floated back up to my room is an understatement.

Meath is only 20 minutes from Dublin city by car, but you feel like you have visited another world.

We had such an enjoyable experience and it was a lovely break from the hustle and bustle of a busy family and working life. **WW** For more details about **Dunboyne Castle Hotel** log on to www.dunboynecastlehotel.com