

TRAVEL

You Could Stay in a Castle — For Real

In Transit

By AMY TARA KOCH MAY 13, 2016



A deluxe queen room at 13th-century Ashford Castle in Ireland for a family of four (two children under 12) can be had for about \$890 a night. [CreditAshford Castle](#)

Castle hotels in England, [Scotland](#) and [Ireland](#) hold an undeniable “Game of Thrones” allure. For families, the notion of resting one’s head where nobles once slumbered is part of the attraction. But participating in Old World leisure pursuits — including archery and falconry — often seals the deal.

[Ashford Castle](#) in western Ireland has been inhabited for centuries by aristocrats (including the Guinness family, of brewing renown) and visited by luminaries like King George V, Prince Rainier III and Princess Grace of Monaco. This 13th-century Anglo-

Norman castle delivers turrets, a moat and opulent rooms. But for children, the action is outside. In addition to offering kayaking and boating on the Lough Corrib, the 350-acre sporting estate is home to the oldest established falconry school in Ireland. For thrill seekers, interaction with a bird of prey during a “hawk walk” (the hawk will swoop down and gobble raw chicken from a child’s glove) will be a highlight. (A deluxe queen room can accommodate a family of two adults and two children under 12; 775 euros, about \$890, per room per night.)

Gaelic glamour is also served at [Dromoland Castle](#) in [County Clare](#), Ireland. The grounds are the backdrop for golf, falconry, archery, tennis, trout fishing and horse riding. From the castle, it is easy to take a day trip along the rugged coastline to the Cliffs of Moher, Limerick and the Burren, a landscape of fossils, limestone and rock formations. (Rates start at €410 per room per night inclusive of a full Irish breakfast for up to two adults and two children under 12 sharing.)

Perched on a “Pride and Prejudice”-worthy bluff in [Devon](#), England, is [Bovey Castle](#), the former estate of W.H. Smith (later to become Viscount Hambleden), in the middle of Dartmoor National Park. Recreation includes quad biking, archery, falconry, air rifle shooting and fishing. (Junior state rooms will fit a family of four — £369 to £469, or \$535 to \$680, per night.)

In the Scottish Highlands, [Tulloch Castle](#) has ancient ambience (secret doorways, crenelated battlements, a wood-paneled great hall) minus the frills. Although it doesn’t offer organized recreation, the 20-bedroom property — the ancestral home of the 12th-century warrior clan Davidson — is a short drive from lochs and woodlands with abundant sporting activities. (A family room sleeps four, £165 per night, including breakfast.)

“Parents are looking for experiences that will open their children’s eyes to the world,” said Jim Strong, president of [Strong Travel Services](#). “A castle stay provides a Downton Abbey setting coupled with historic recreation — falconry, nature hikes, blacksmith for a day — that fires a kid’s imagination.”

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