



Hayfield Manor is a country-style escape in the heart of Cork city; below: the Hayfield Master Suite



CITY BY THE LEE

Nobody does civic pride quite like the people of Cork, but can it really impress in 48 hours? Catherine McCabe gives it a try

The thing I love about Cork’ my friend whispers to me as we nurse our hangovers in the Triskel Arts Centre café, ‘is the inferiority complex of its people,’ and we burst out laughing. If you’re confused, chances are you’ve yet to visit, because the first thing you notice about Corkonians, is that they possess a particular kind of pride in their city.

Everything seems easier here – even the transfer from the airport, less than 20 minutes in a taxi (around €15). Our hotel, Hayfield Manor, one of the few five star venues in Cork, is the kind of beautiful restored Victorian home-turned-hotel normally found miles beyond Slough train station in the UK. Here, it’s a short walk from the city centre, located right behind University College Cork. The UCC just happens to house the Lewis Glucksman art gallery – a striking ‘floating’ building that looks like half-finished a Chinese puzzle. The service at the Hayfield is second to none – cordial but never overbearing, and the rooms old-country style with outrageously



Cork locals often refer to the city as Ireland’s ‘true’ capital

Lee to the city centre.

The Mutton Lane Inn, a hidden heritage pub opposite a famous wall mural, is a good place to start the night. Arthur Mayne, a 120-year-old chemist that’s now a wine bar and restaurant is worth a visit for its sharing plates and walls lined with potions and elixirs.

It took me 48 hours to understand why Corkonians champion the

‘People’s Republic’ with such conviction. It’s got the energy and culture of Dublin, without the herds of stags and hen dos. It’s got jazz, fresh farmers’ produce from the English Market; it’s got Cillian Murphy for crying out loud. On the flight back to London, I found myself looking out over my city and thinking ‘well, it’s all right...but it’s not Cork.’

comfy, enveloping beds. By the entrance, there’s an aviary and a rabbit run. Who wouldn’t love a hotel with resident rabbits?

I usually ignore hotel spas and opt for a pack of smoky bacon and a Beamish, but The Beautique at Hayfield is worth skipping a stout for. A pool featuring sun loungers that look out onto hotel gardens is not a regular sight in blustery Ireland, but this is Cork, where optimism lives.

The great thing about this country escape is that you actually get to escape, with the option to run free over the River

TRAVEL NOTES

Stay in the Grand Suite at Hayfield Manor from €590 per night or choose a Manor Room, from €189 per night. Contact: +353 21 484 5900; hayfieldmanor.ie. Hayfield Manor is one of the Small Luxury Hotels of the world slh.com