

# Gaelic Castle

**Region:** County Clare **Sleeps:** 8

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## Overview

Situated in the enchanting green landscape of County Clare is this authentic 15th century Gaelic Castle/or tower house. The castle is 500 years old and has a perfect mix of medieval aesthetics and modern amenities such as underfloor heating facilitating a holiday which is homely as well as providing participation in a medieval experience.

It is a castle with a benevolent and kind personality that enjoys gatherings, which reflects its original use in the 15th Century. The castle accommodates up to 8 guests in 6 bedrooms with Irish linen sheets and pillow cases and authentic woollen blankets from Co. Tipperary to keep warm and cosy. There are three bathrooms floored with Liscannor stone flags and with polished brass sinks.

The top floor of the 6-storey castle is the Great Hall, which preserves the grand atmosphere of the Irish Middle Ages. Many of the floors in the Castle are of Liscannor stone, which is a rare, and beautiful hardwearing limestone from close by.

The ceilings of the castle contain traces of the hazel branches that were used to hold plaster in the 15th century and are marked with the imprints of branches which make it a lovely decorate feature.

The castle has underfloor heating throughout. The thick limestone walls help to keep the heat in the tower. The surrounding Burren limestone provides a similar experience for the cattle that are sent to graze in the winter months.

Outside, the bawn or outer wall naturally decorates itself with small ferns and flowers that grow and self-seed in the crevices of the limestone. These include pennywort, lichens and ivy that act as the perfect refuge for small



birds.

The Castle has a stream closeby that forms a boundary. From on top the view is of several lakes along with breathtaking countryside views of the shelves of sloping limestone of the Clare hills that were deposited by glaciers up to the last ice age 10,000 years ago.

The closest beach to the castle is at beautiful Lahinch Beach. This provides a perfect location for surfing on the Atlantic waves and is close to where you can catch a ferry to see the beautiful Aran Islands of the coast of Ireland.

## Facilities

Chef/Cook Available • Beach Nearby • Waterfront • Chateaux & Castles • Heritage Collection • Board games • Recommended • Ideal for Teens • <1hr to Airport • Working Fireplace/Woodburner • Heating • Outstanding Landscapes • Outdoor Pursuit & Activities • Tourist Towns & Villages

# Interior & Grounds

The Gaelic Castle contains 6 bedrooms and 3 bathrooms. The castle can comfortably accommodate between 4 and 8 guests.

## Ground Floor

Arriving at the castle you enter into a splendid kitchen and sitting room. The room boast a welcoming fireplace, stone coffee table, well stocked bookshelves and a turf burning stove. There is plenty of good quality local crockery.

The fridge freeze, dishwasher and large 6 burning gas ranges for cooking are the 21st century contributions to relaxed rustic living.

There is a cloakroom and toilet located on the ground floor.

## Second Floor

There is large bedroom with a double bed. Each of the six bedrooms has been lovingly furnished retaining plenty of the castle charm, using fabrics in keeping with its late 15th century medieval heyday. Linen sheets and pillowcases and wool blankets from Co Tipperary complete the attractive dressing of the beds.

All the furnishings have been carefully selected by experts to reflect late medieval Ireland, a time of hospitality, song and poetry in a Gaelic castle. To this end the best craftsmanship is used throughout the castle to help sympathetically bring it back to life the 500 year old castle.

Located just above the bedroom in the original garderobe space is a shower room with WC and sink.

## Third Floor

From the entrance stone spiral steps lead up to the rooms. At the top of the castle tower is the impressive Great Hall with exposed oak roof trusses. The room is centred around a lovely open fireplace, with large couches and a table for dining.



There is a second kitchen with a dishwasher, fridge and electric cooker that serves the Great Hall.

### **Other Floors**

Leading off from the other side of the staircase are 4 additional bedrooms. Each located on separate floors in the original bed chamber space. Two bedrooms have double beds and two offer pairs of single beds.

\*\*\*Please note the curving late medieval stone staircase may not suit small children or those with a walking disability. Along with the guests WC on the ground floor level there are 2 bathrooms, with shower and toilet, soap etc. 2 towels are allocated to each guest, while the water supply will cope with several showers at a time, guests may need to stagger the times of ablutions \*\*\*



# Location & Local Information

The fifteenth century Gaelic castle of Ballyportry is situated in an area that is rich in heritage, and close to the Wild Atlantic Way. Very few Gaelic castles survive so relatively intact from the late Middle Ages in Ireland.

We encourage visitors to explore hills guarded by cairns, court tombs, and wedge tombs of about 5000 years ago, as well as valleys strewn with ring forts and stone cashels, tower houses and roofless medieval churches. The cartographer Tim Robinson made a map of the Burren some years ago showing every field and boundary wall. The stone walls are beautiful in themselves, built with skill to keep animals enclosed. Recently many of the 'green' roads that were overgrown have been cleared of invasive hazel bushes to make accessible walk ways again.

Visitors come to the Burren to walk and appreciate the flowers and the limestone landscape. They enjoy exploring the paths and 'green' roads in a landscape that is shaped by Atlantic winds and nourished by the warm current of the Gulf Stream as it pushes up the Atlantic coast of Clare.

There are at least 25 Burren plants that are really special because of their rarity. Among them the spring gentian is known for its abundance in sheltered spots of the Burren. The mountain avens spread across the limestone pavements on the higher slopes. The hoary rock rose pushes between the crevices to produce an elegant and simple creamy flower. It is a pleasure to walk the rocky slopes and count the varieties of different flowering plants no matter how limited your knowledge of plant names might be. The poet Michael Longley describes the Burren flowers in his poem 'The Ice Cream Man'

At night the gate of the bawn wall of the castle frames the moon as it rises over the distinctive shelving outline of the Clare hills and nearby Mullaghmore. A ten minute drive in a car will bring you to its slopes and the lovely Gealáin lake and a series of walks around on the signed ways, and to the National Park of the Burren.

Another drive might be to Cathair Chomain, a stone cliff fort of the early historic period that was in use until about the year 1200 AD. This is about 20 minutes from Ballyportry by car, an expedition that children always enjoy, stick in hand as they climb to the fort through small fertile valleys visited also by grazing cattle.

In the Burren the cattle ascend to graze the uplands in winter. The situation of Ballyportry is unique and we hesitate to suggest sports activities. In preference we make the suggestions of trips to look at the archaeology, landscape and views of the Atlantic across to the Aran Islands.

There are well known golf links at Lahinch, surfing schools along the coastline of the Atlantic at Fanore and Lahinch. For a full day's outing take a boat trip from Liscannor to look at the wealth of bird life on the famous Cliffs of Moher and on out to the Aran Islands that once formed a kingdom with the Burren.

Few Gaelic castles survived intact in the years following the sixteenth/seventeenth wars in Ireland after which the Gaelic aristocracy left for the Continent. Ballyportry castle is the finest and most authentic habitable tower house in the south or west of Ireland, possibly in the whole



country. It's builders, the O'Briens held most of the territory of Clare in the fifteenth Century.

The Gaelic Castle was one of a series of castles and churches built by the 'Briens, Gaelic aristocrats of the middle ages. In Gaelic Ireland this was a time of culture, intrigue, aristocracy and poetry. The late fifteenth century Gaelic chiefs would have lived lives of privilege, culture, politics and warfare. It was a time of shifting political alliances.

### Local Amenities

Nearest Airport	<b>Shannon Airport</b> (40 km)
Nearest Ferry Port	<b>Dublin Ferry Port</b> (241 km)
Nearest Village	<b>Corofin</b> (2 km)
Nearest Town/City	<b>Ennis</b> (15 km)
Nearest Beach	<b>Lahinch Beach</b> (24 km)
Nearest Golf	<b>Ennis Golf Club</b> (16 km)
Nearest Train Station	<b>Ennis Train Station</b> (17 km)
Nearest Supermarket	<b>Ennistimon</b> (7.9 km)
Nearest Tennis	<b>Ennis Lawn Tennis &amp; Badminton Club</b> (15 km)

## What we love

- The medieval heritage of this property mixed with modern amenities which provides a perfect mix of history with comfort.
- Enjoying the sunset in the Great Hall at the top of the Gaelic Castle while dining on a perfect steak from the local butcher.

## What you should know...

- The only entrance to the rooms is up the beautiful spiral staircase, however, this can be a problem for small children or people with walking difficulties. The castle works well for families with children from 8 years and older.
- Guests are advised to try to shower at different times to conserve the hot water supply.
- Please note: Guest must arrive promptly at 4.00 pm, late arrivals will not be admitted into the property.
- Please note that there is No Wi-fi access at the Castle. The walls are made of stone which is 5' thick at the base with stone layers that are similar. It would be difficult to get a signal. We suggest that guests can use a device with a satellite connection and that guests would visit the Old Ground Hotel in Ennis if they have a need for a lengthy use of Wifi.

# Terms & Conditions

- **Security deposit:** €1000 charged to client's credit card as a pre-authorisation at least 2 weeks prior to arrival and refunded two weeks after departure, subject to full inspection. Any damages and all utility for heating, electricity and gas is charged by the meter, logs for the fire are measured by the bag and deducted from the security deposit. The Security deposit will be refunded within 2 weeks of departure.

- **Arrival time:** Guest must arrive promptly at 4.00 pm, late arrivals will not be admitted into the property

- **Departure time:** 10.00 am

- **Energy costs included?:** No these will be deducted from the security deposit

- **Linen & towels included?:** Linen bedsheets and irish woolen blankets are provided

- **Pets welcome?:** No dogs because the castle is surrounded by fields with grazing cattle and we have donkeys or horses on the land immediately around the castle. The farmers do not like visiting dogs.

- **End of stay cleaning available?:** Yes

- **Smoking Allowed?:** No

- **Minimum stay:** 3 day minimum stay. If you would like to stay for a shorter period a 3 day payment would still be required.

- **Internet access?:** Please note that there is No Wi-fi access at the Castle

\*\*\*Please note the wonderful curving late medieval stone staircase may not suit small children or those with a walking disability. Along with the guests WC on the ground floor level there are 2 bathrooms, with soap etc. 2 towels are allocated to each guest, while the water supply will cope with several showers at a time, guests may need to stagger the times of ablutions \*\*\*

## Additional Terms

- Please note: Guest must arrive promptly at 4.00 pm, late arrivals will not be admitted into the property.

- There is no TV at the castle

- The castle is constructed of limestone and is around 500 years old. It can therefore at time be dusty. The castle is always full cleaned by two people before guests arrive in accordance with the conservation principles. All the floors are washed down and swept and vacuumed. It is always the same two people who do the work for a number of years and they know the castle very well and in all weathers and times of the year.

- The owner kindly request you to be good guardians of the catle and to respect and take care of it during your stay.

- Tanya will prepare a delicious 3 course dinner on guests first night stay for costing £30 p/p. This is a mandatory requirement for all guests staying at the castle.

- Only 8 guests are permitted to stay at the castle. The names of each guest must be submitted the time of booking.

- All meals that are cooked are served by Tanya are prepared ans served downstairs. However if you do wish to enjoy a gala dinner upstairs in the Great Hall prepared by Tanya, the guests are required to bring the meal up from the downstairs kitchen.

- No furniture is to be moved between rooms.

- Extra furniture cannot be brought in without the owner's permission prior to arrival.

- There is no running in the castle due to the stone floors the surface can be slippery. There are plenty of board games to play and books to enjoy instead.