

Finding a castle fit for a king (of pop)

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The
June 24 2017, 12:01am, Times



Adams & Butler organised the honeymoon of Kim Kardashian including a trip to Ballyfin Demense
G E T T Y I M A G E S



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Afternoon tea with the Guinness family, lunch with the Earl of Ross and access to some of Ireland's most luxurious properties are among the bespoke bookings taken by a travel agent for the super-rich.

Adams & Butler, which planned the honeymoon of the reality TV star Kim Kardashian and the rapper Kanye West in 2014, specialises in offering personalised Irish holiday itineraries to extremely wealthy clients.

Siobhan Byrne Learat, the founder of the company, which also organised singer Michael Jackson's three-month stay at the Luggala Estate in Co Wicklow in 2006, said that nothing is off the cards when it comes to providing for the needs of the super-rich.

"We had an American CEO who spent €270,000 on a trip here with his family," she said. "They stayed at Luttrellstown Castle and had the entire property to themselves."

"In 2008, I got a call from Taylor Swift's mother and she wanted to book a castle in Dublin, so they all flew over with friends and stayed at Luttrellstown too. We are very discreet about our clients and Taylor was able to come in and out without anybody knowing. They wanted three kegs of Guinness for their party and the property had just been sold, so all of the furniture had to be brought back in for her stay."

Not so low-key was the 2014 honeymoon of Kim Kardashian and Kanye West, which included visits to Castle Oliver in

Limerick and Ballyfin Demense in Laois. Perhaps predictably, the couple were somewhat fussy when it came to where they were going to stay.

“I had suggested three properties in Ireland, Luttrellstown, Luggala and Stafford House,” Ms Byrne Learat said. “The couple came back and didn’t want them for various reasons. They didn’t want to go to Luttrellstown Castle because Taylor Swift had stayed there for instance.”

Castle Oliver in Limerick was eventually booked for the couple after a planned trip to Scotland fell through. Although there were reports at the time that they were unhappy with the phone signal and refused to pay €15,000 of their bill, Ms Byrne said the couple did pay and “paid in advance”.

Asked if the honeymoon had resulted in a surge in business, she said “they did nothing for us really to be honest, we were already well established.”

In 2006, the company was contacted by representatives of Michael Jackson, who were looking for a private residence where the pop star could relax. Jackson spent time on the Guinness estate of Luggala in Co Wicklow before moving on to Grouse Lodge in Co Westmeath with his children.

Ms Byrne Learat said the famously finicky singer was a dream to deal with.

“Michael and his family came and stayed in Ireland for over a year in total,” Ms Byrne Learat said. “There was a very good relationship and he was very low key. Every so often they would visit a local shop or something, but the Irish press were amazing and that’s why he stayed so long.

“The only issue was that when the Ryder Cup arrived, the world’s press were at the gate of Luggala looking for him and they rang asking that we get them out. They then moved on to Westmeath,” she said.

The company offers wealthy clients a residence with the Earl of Erne at his home in Crom Castle in Co Fermanagh. Guests sit down to tea with the earl and are given a tour of his home and estate. The package includes a trip to Lord and Lady Hamilton’s residence in nearby Enniskillen to see their gardens.

The four-day trip is a favourite of Americans, mainly due to the popularity of TV shows such as *Downton Abbey*. A trip to Highclere Castle in the UK, where the ITV series is filmed, is also available.

“We vet all of our clients as most of the aristocracy won’t want their property to be open to the general public,” Ms Byrne Learat said.

“These clients want the right type of person staying. If you have a castle, the paintings and sculptures might be worth millions and how are you ever going to take a deposit for that?”

Adams & Butler have also tapped into the success of HBO’s *Game of Thrones*, offering packages to Northern Ireland, with the option of meeting the show’s direwolf puppies and dressing up as the Starks of Winterfell.



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