



TOP CASTLE HOTEL!

ULSTER TATLER'S CATHERINE PATTON VISITS
CASTLE LESLIE ESTATE, CO. MONAGHAN.

When an opportunity comes up for a visit to a member of Ireland's Blue Book, this offer is to be taken seriously and when I discovered the venue of choice this time was Castle Leslie Estate I was quite simply delighted.

Castle Leslie Estate is steeped in history; nestled on 1,000 acres of undulating Irish countryside, dotted with ancient woodlands and glittering lakes, I knew it would be a visit to remember. Located in the village of Glaslough, Co. Monaghan, the estate is only 80 minutes from Dublin and 60 minutes from Belfast.

Accommodation

There's a wide variety of places to stay at Castle Leslie Estate including the Castle, 4 star self catering in the Old Stable Mews & Village Cottages and the fabulous Lodge, a 4 star country house style boutique hotel which was our base for the night. The Lodge is welcoming, relaxed, informal and sociable and the full length glass windows provided a barrier to the brisk autumn evening outside. Our bedroom had a traditional feel but, at the same time, everything was on offer for the modern traveller including slippers, dressing gowns and toiletries.

Activities on offer

A host of activities are on offer at Castle Leslie Estate including pike fishing for the nature enthusiast, a private cinema for movie buffs, exceptional walking trails for those who want to breathe in fresh country air, kayaking and clay pigeon shooting for the more adventurous, hot air balloon rides for those looking for exhilaration, falconry for those to experience nature up close, a fabulous spa for rejuvenation and of course the famous world-class equestrian centre!

Dining

We were booked into Snaffles restaurant for our evening meal which is a 2 AA Rosette award winning restaurant. Set on a mezzanine floor, the open plan restaurant overlooked the wonderful view of the ancient woodland



and the hand carved oak beams only went to enhance an intimate dining experience. The restaurant was buzzing when we arrived and upon first glance of the menu I knew we were in for a special treat. Our host explained that we would be having a 6 course menu, some courses smaller in quantity than others. To get us started we both enjoyed the fish fritter appetizer served with cucumber salsa. My starter choice of crab cocktail bound with mayonnaise, orange jelly, tarragon mousse, citrus cream and lime granite with a garlic crisp was the most wonderfully presented dish, the taste and flavour equally wonderful. My companion opted for the pan fried breast of wood pigeon with a blackberry and oregano

crème brulee, glazed carrots, crispy panchetta and barley jus. Served pink, she absolutely loved her choice and was left wanting more as the fusion of flavours were excellent.

Moving onto mains, after a beautiful sorbet, the menu offered something for all palettes. I favoured the roast breast of local chicken with mixed vegetable terrine, blackened cauliflower florets, white sweet potato crisp and a citrus and black garlic dressing. This was a great choice with the chicken cooked perfectly and the accompanying jus made a delicious meal. My companion had the pan fried fillet of Irish beef with lentil and vegetable cassoulet, crispy potato, creamed spinach, pink peppercorn tuile and pink peppercorn cream. Cooked as ordered, this dish was a great example of good cooking using the finest local ingredients.

For dessert, I enjoyed the baby pineapple served with pineapple mousse, pineapple and mint salad, honey spaghetti, pineapple jam and ice cream with roasted hazelnuts while my companion opted for the hot chocolate mouse soufflé with chocolate crumble and vanilla ice cream. Both were exceptional, just like the entire dining experience.

After dinner we retired to the warmth of Conor's Bar for a post dinner drink, the

roaring fire and friendly atmosphere left us very contented and with a warm glow inside we retired for the evening.

Summary

I thoroughly enjoyed my time and I would highly recommend booking a break to experience what the glorious Castle Leslie Estate has to offer. Their overnight packages start from £98 per person sharing which includes one night's accommodation at The Lodge, a full hearty Irish breakfast and dinner in Snaffles Restaurant.

For a full list of special offers, please visit www.castleleslie.com

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Castle Leslie Estate
Glaslough
Co. Monaghan
Telephone: 0035347 88100
Email: info@castleleslie.com
Web: www.castleleslie.com



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