



HOTEL HUNTER: CASTLE LESLIE ESTATE

With wonderful memories of a delightful weekend at The Lodge at Castle Leslie Estate, dining in the fabulous Snaffles restaurant, pampering in the Victorian Treatment Rooms and lounging in the hot tub overlooking the cut-stone stable courtyard, we decided it was time to revisit this very special place, this time from a slightly different perspective.

First time around we were a couple with time on our hands and a priority of rest, relaxation and fine dining so we stayed in one of the beautiful superior rooms at The Lodge, just steps from the restaurant and Conor's bar. This time, we embraced the Castle Leslie experience as a family of three with our enthusiastic three-year-old in tow!

This is one of the many beauties of Castle Leslie Estate; there is something for everyone with a diverse range of accommodation from the previously described Lodge rooms to the unique heritage bedrooms of the original Castle and the self-catering Old Stable Mews accommodation, which overlooks a picturesque cut-stone courtyard, surrounded by acres of woodland walks. While we also wanted to enjoy the relaxed dining options at The Lodge, we also loved the flexibility of this self-catering option, which provided an ideal home-from-home experience. The Old Stable Mews delivered on all levels. A ten-minute walk or short drive from check-in at The Lodge, the Old Stable Mews is a hidden gem embraced by woodland with meandering paths for endless outdoor adventures. With its own designated parking area right next to the accommodation, the mews also has its own garden with a little

swing and slide making it the idyllic home from home for little ones.

Inside, the decor is classic contemporary with a homely farmhouse feel, a well-equipped kitchen, dining and living space in a sociable open plan layout, opening onto your own little stretch of garden. With the entrance hall at bedroom level (two bedrooms, a bathroom and en suite), downstairs is another bathroom as well as the open plan main living space. Everything and more than one would need and expect for a weekend away. Our daughter has since lovingly coined it our 'holiday house' so we're definitely going to make plenty of future reservations to avoid disappointment!

A spacious and comfortable base for exploring the Estate, we welcomed the self-catering option but also made sure to experience the ambience and dining options in The Lodge, which is very much the beating heart of the Estate. Here locals and residents alike gather to enjoy drinks or casual dining in Conor's Bar, or something a little more formal in Snaffles restaurant. Since our last visit, we were delighted to see a new addition to the dining experience, in the form of the inviting new conservatory. Sympathetically designed to look as though it has always been here, this

new dining area was the perfect place for us to dine, as a casual and family-friendly space. With a great little kids menu and varied main menu, we enjoyed a very relaxed early evening meal here, and even managed a digestif before retreating to our cosy mews.

Breakfast in Snaffles was every bit as good as I remembered, with a fabulous host of options, both continental and cooked. And after breakfast, we got to give the horses a morning snack, much to the delight of our three year old! Just ask at reception and the lovely staff will provide you with some chopped apples to treat your equine friends. This was one of the many highlights – not forgetting the communal playroom in the Old Stable Mews complete with ping pong table, puzzles and all sorts of old school children's games – that made this weekend one to remember and recreate. Another recent development, in addition to the new conservatory, is 21 new bedrooms in The Lodge, bringing accommodation in this property to 50 bedrooms, with 20 bedrooms in The Castle. There is also a beautiful art exhibition area in the new wing of The Lodge, showcasing a number of stunning paintings by local artists, all of which are available for purchase. castleleslie.com

