



ON THE TRAIL OF LUXURY

Afficionado travels to Ireland to find out more about its premium local brands, rich history and traditions, and discovers a luxury destination like no other

BY VINEETHA MENON





Master tailor Louis Copeland at his store in Dublin

Ireland is beautiful. There's no doubt of that. Postcard-perfect settings of rolling hills, jagged cliffs, fields of flowers and charmingly rustic towns are every traveller's dream, while the history and heritage housed within its lands is nothing short of astounding. For example, did you know the popular Unesco World Heritage Site Newgrange – a monument in County Meath – was built in approximately 3200BC, making it older than the Egyptian pyramids? I didn't. And I'm told a visit to the less accessible Skellig Michael is equally worth it. Home to a historic Gaelic monastery, the earliest reference to the Skellig Islands dates back to an astounding 1400BC, and the monastery can only be reached by climbing 600 steps, ascending over 600 feet. . . but, I've charted out an entirely different path, and soon I find myself on the trail of luxury.

My first stop is **Appleby Jewellers**, which needs little introduction for those in the industry. The story of Dublin's most famous jewellers is very much a family affair, when Margaret Appleby created beautiful pieces for a select group of customers. In 1950, she and her husband John opened their shop in Johnson's court, sparking the legacy that Appleby Jewellers is today, continued by three of their sons Gerard, Joseph and Mark Appleby.

"We were very lucky because of my family's history during the war, a lot of doors were opened and we were allowed into the diamond market more so than other people in Ireland. My father was also an athlete and he brought us up with a simple philosophy to never do anything second-best.

"He said that if we wanted to be jewellers, we'd have to better jewellers than everyone else and that's always what we're aiming to do. We want to remain at





EASY TRAVEL

The **Short-Stay Visa Waiver Scheme**, introduced in 2011, allows GCC visitors Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE who have valid UK visit visas to also visit Ireland, without a separate Irish visa.

Since January 1, 2014, if you hold a passport from the UAE, Qatar or Oman you can visit the UK (for tourism, business or study purposes) for up to six months with an electronic visa waiver (EVW) that can be completed online and is free of charge. Ireland will also recognise these EVW documents, making it even easier for Gulf nationals to travel to the country.

the forefront of jewellery making in Ireland,” reveals Mark Appleby, director at Appleby Jewellers.

Because they are in control of every aspect of the jewellery making process, from sourcing through to cutting, setting and design, custom-made and more intricate bespoke pieces are taken on and executed with flair. They often receive orders for special pieces of jewellery for celebrities and VIP clients, but they always treat them with the strictest of confidence, and also treat every person who walks into their store as special, reflecting the genuine warmth the family is known for.

“We live in a modern world, but you know what, certain old traditional values need to be kept,” Appleby adds.

Leaving the shine of jewels, I set off for **Louis Copeland & Sons**. The company dates back to founder Hyman Caplan in the early 1900s and is now in the fourth generation of the same family, led by brothers, Louis and Adrian Copeland. The name is respected globally for designer suits and Louis is, in fact, also a proud member of the International Menswear Group (IMG), a unique organisation founded in 1958 comprised of the very finest menswear retailers from around the world.

He recently set up the National Tailoring Academy in Dublin, with courses delivered by master tailors in a real life studio and workshop environment, inspiring a new generation of tailors. At Louis Copeland & Sons, you’ll not only find a large selection of suits – the largest selection in Ireland – but also an incredible range

of ready to wear suits for business, special occasions or everyday looks. Italian clothing company Canali is its number one brand, but it has a range of high-end brands including the likes of Armani and Ermenegildo Zegna to choose from. The emphasis, however, is always on quality.

“I don’t always go for the big names; we have labels that are much better than the top names. I prefer to give my customers quality,” says Louis Copeland, who adds that classic suits never go out of fashion. While he’s dressed celebrities such as Matthew McConaughey, Pierce Brosnan, Tom Jones and other A-listers, Copeland remains remarkably humble and can often be seen personally dealing with customers who walk through the store.

If you’re short of time, but need to get some shopping done, keep just one address in mind: **Arnotts** at Henry Street. Arnott’s is the oldest and largest department store in Dublin and stocks an impressive range of Irish brands for men, including Magee Clothing range of famous tweed jackets and the inimitable Paul Costelloe alongside more international names such as Hackett, Ted Baker and Hugo Boss.

Thankfully, there’s also the option of having a personal stylist do all the shopping for you and make recommendations based on your style preference, so you’re guaranteed to leave with more than a few bags of quality clothing.

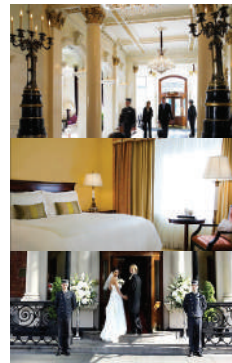
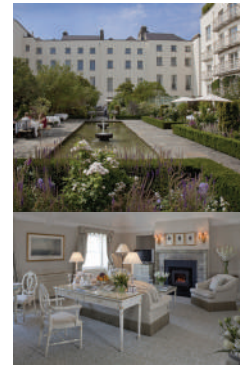




ESSENTIAL ADDRESSES

The Merrion

A member of The Leading Hotels of the World, The Merrion is located in the heart of Dublin, next to the National Gallery and Grafton Street for designer shopping. The five-star hotel is home to an important private collection of 19th- and 20th-century art. Book an Art Tea, its signature afternoon tea experience, inspired by the finest works of art. **Contact: +353 1 603 0600, www.merrionhotel.com**

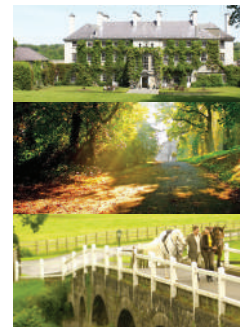


The Shelbourne Hotel

An iconic hotel in Ireland for the past two centuries, The Shelbourne Hotel was where the Irish constitution was drafted in 1922, and continues to play a part in important social occasions even today. The hotel has been beautifully restored, retaining its Renaissance essence, with a museum in the lobby of the hotel to showcase some of its fascinating history. **Contact: +353 1 663 4500, www.mariott.com**

Mount Juliet

An 18th century architectural marvel, Mount Juliet House in Kilkenny has only been operating as a luxury hotel since 1989. It boasts a Jack Nicklaus signature golf course, a range of activities such as shooting, archery, horse riding, and more, as well as a fun Kids Club making it the ideal family stay in the Irish countryside. **Contact: +353 56 777 3000, www.mountjuliet.ie**



If you have the time to explore outside Dublin, make your way to Kilkenny that's home to more fine Irish brands rooted in heritage, such as **Cushendale** at Graig-na-managh in Kilkenny, one of Ireland's few authentic woollen mills. Not many realise that Graig-na-managh has had a connection with wool textile manufacturing dating as far back as 1204. Since the 1800s, the Cushen family have produced the highest quality woollen products such as blankets, throws and mohair, using natural-fibre textiles made with mohair, Irish wool and merino lambswool, and the mill is open to those who want to take a closer look.

Afterwards, make sure to stop by **Nicholas Mosse Pottery** at Bennettsbridge, County Kilkenny, where you can purchase a wide range of clay products directly from the famous company. The business was set up in 1976 by avid potter Nick and his wife Susan, a botanical artist, who is responsible for the patterns and designs of the brand. It stands out from the competition because, till this day, every single piece of pottery is produced by hand with patterns and designs applied using an old technique dating back to the 18th century, using cut sponges. The result of the 20-step, entirely handmade process, is exquisite, and all the more special considering the workmanship behind it.

It's a shame that Ireland often gets overlooked as a luxury destination of choice over its more glitzy cousin, England. There's a genuine warmth and respect for tradition and history here. ■



Ballyfin

Admired as one of the most lavish Regency mansions in Ireland, Ballyfin re-opened in 2011 as a five-star country house hotel, offering the highest standards of Irish hospitality. With only 15 rooms at the 600-acre estate at the foot of the Slieve Bloom Mountains, it offers the ideal escape for those looking for a more exclusive stay. **Contact: +353 57 875 5866, www.ballyfin.com**

