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by Jan Ross, Social Media Director, The Travel Authority

"The castle has a double nature; it is both a home and a fortress..."

- William Anderson, the author of "Castles of Western Europe"

When I was offered a trip to Ireland with Brendan Vacations, I unhesitatingly accepted since I have always wanted to visit Ireland. My husband was a little more hesitant. Not being a big fan of long flights, he was not sure about making the long flight to Ireland.

It was the castle that changed his mind. Dromoland Castle. For years, he had talked about wanting to visit and stay in a castle someday and now he had the opportunity because we would be staying in the historic Dromoland Castle Hotel for several nights.

As we drove through the stone gateway and wound through gorgeous acres of lush grass, saw the green rolling hills of the world-class golf course and beautiful, old trees covered with gold and copper fall leaves, our excitement at seeing the fabulous Dromoland Castle Hotel began to build. And, as we pulled up to the ivy-covered front of the gray stone walled castle, we were not disappointed.

Dromoland Castle is one of the most famous baronial castles in Ireland and was the ancestral home of the O'Briens, Barons of Inchiquin. The O'Briens are one of the few native Gaelic families in Ireland and are direct descendents of Brian Boruimhie (Boru), the High King of Ireland in the eleventh century. Donough O'Brien, a son of Brian Boru, was the lord of the castle when Dromoland was just a defensive stronghold. The Queen Anne Court was built in 1700 with 29 guestrooms

and is a century older than the rest of the castle, which was rebuilt in 1800 with stone from a nearby quarry on the Dromoland Estate. In 1962 the castle and part of the grounds were sold and converted into a luxury hotel but the O'Brien family retained a home and part of the estate and continue to live there.

When we walked out of the cold, rainy, gray Irish day into the comfortable front lobby, decorated in warm colors and furnished with overstuffed furniture, we felt completely relaxed. You could easily think it is the front lobby of any luxury hotel until you notice the gray stone castle walls. And the two suits of armor displayed by the front desk.

After visiting our large and comfortable room, we headed out to explore and proceeded to roam around the entire castle, taking pictures and marveling at the combination of opulence and comfort which result in the feel of a country house more than a castle. We strolled through halls with floors covered in lush, burgundy carpets, marveled at hundreds of year's worth of family portraits on the walls and peered through gorgeous stained-glass windows at the beautiful grounds.

Then we headed outside, where the rainy day had combined with sunshine to create a lovely rainbow – a common sight in Ireland. We strolled around the grounds, visiting the turret Sir Edward O'Brien built so he could watch his racehorses. He once gambled the entire estate on a race but, luckily, his horse Sean Buis won the race and was later buried under the Temple, 100 yards from the entrance to the castle. Colorful and fearless pheasants were everywhere, running across the path in front of us and darting into the thick undergrowth.

We rented a golf cart and I recommend this as the best way to see the grounds if you are short on time, since we were able to drive all around the lush grounds of the golf course and get a



great and completely different view of the castle over the beautiful Dromoland Lough.

We were fortunate to be at Dromoland Castle on Halloween and they set up a huge bonfire after dinner for all the costume-bedecked guests. As the fire roared, spotlights illuminated the outside of the castle and warm golden light shining through the windows made the inside look very cozy indeed.

I find myself at my word limit and have not even told you about my wonderful experience in the spa, the completely fabulous food we had every day and the many other activities offered at the castle.

Let me just say that if you are even in Ireland? You should visit Dromoland Castle Hotel with Brendan Vacations. You will not be sorry.

About the Author:

Jan Ross is the Social Media Director for The Travel Authority. Read her blog at <http://thetravelauthority.blogspot.com/> to find out about other fabulous travel deals and travel information. Or call The Travel Authority at 1-877-AXP-1515. They have offices located all over Central Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, Tennessee and Florida and will help you get the best possible deal for a wonderful trip.

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