

WEXFORD
OPERA FESTIVAL
2025

AUTUMNAL COLOUR & OPERA IN
IRELAND'S
ANCIENT EAST

AN ESCORTED TOUR VISITING SOME OF
IRELAND'S GREAT HOUSES INCLUDING
PERFORMANCES AT THE WEXFORD OPERA FESTIVAL
WITH GUEST SPEAKER ROBERT O'BYRNE

20TH TO 25TH OCTOBER 2025

NOBLE CALEDONIA

Killruddery House



An Introduction by Andrew Cochrane, Noble Caledonia Founder & Director



“ We have always had in mind that we should arrange a tour to include the famous Wexford Opera Festival. Whilst staying at the marvellous Marlfield House in County Wexford on a music and garden tour we had arranged for the summer of 2024, I realised it was the perfect base for visiting the Opera Festival as well as taking in some of the great houses of Ireland’s Ancient East. Perhaps the month of October does not spring readily to mind as a time for such a visit, but having visited Ireland numerous times in autumn over the years, I have concluded it is an ideal time for a tour such as this. The colours of autumn are magical and even the gardens with their last summer colours have a charm, and best of all everywhere is crowd free.

Our five night itinerary will begin with a visit to Killruddery House which, under the Stewardship of Lord and Lady Ardee has been transformed into a cultural highlight of Ireland’s Ancient East. It is a family home to three generations of the Brabazon family who run the estate including a working farm. On the drive back to Marlfield we will make a stop at National Botanic Garden and Arboretum, no place better than to witness the changing seasons. Other highlights will include Farmleigh House and Estate with its important collection of art and furniture and Russborough House, a Palladian jewel and home to the Beit Collection.

We have timed our visit to coincide with the wonderful Wexford Opera Festival and will enjoy two evening performances at the Wexford Opera House; Verdi’s ‘Le Trouvere’ and ‘The Magic Fountain’ by Frederick Delius. On these two days, the arrangements will be lighter allowing free time to rest and enjoy the delights of Marlfield House which is a stunningly elegant period hotel that has been welcoming guests for over 40 years. Set in 36 acres of lovely gardens and woodland it is the perfect place for our tour. ”



Farmleigh House



Huntington Castle

TRAVELLING WITH YOU

Tour Leader – Chantal Cookson



Chantal was born in Suffolk very near the sea and now lives in Northumberland where her husband farms. Chantal has been associated with Noble Caledonia since the company was founded in 1991 and has led tours, be it cruising or land, all over the world. Chantal's initial experience of cruising in British waters was in 1991 when Noble Caledonia undertook its first cruise around the

British Isles, which was a groundbreaking voyage and led to a very successful and popular concept. Though her main job for over 25 years was working for Sotheby's, she is now a Travel and Fine Art Consultant intertwining in her busy life still working periodically as part of the Noble Caledonia Expedition Team and also as a Tour Leader for land tours. Chantal has been instrumental in the creation of Noble Caledonia's escorted land tours in the UK and Ireland. Chantal is a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society.

Guest Speaker – Robert O'Byrne



A former Vice-President of the Irish Georgian Society, Robert O'Byrne is today one of Ireland's best-known writers and lecturers specialising in the country's historic houses and gardens. He is the author of more than a dozen books, among them *Luggala: The Story of a Guinness House*; *Romantic Irish Homes* and *The Irish Country House: A New Vision*. For many years a contributor to *Apollo Magazine*, *The Burlington*

Magazine and the *Irish Arts Review*, during 2021/22 Robert curated a number of events, including exhibitions, lectures and a conference, all on the theme of Ireland's country house gardens for the Irish Georgian Society. In Autumn 2021, his series on the same subject 'Ireland's Historic Gardens' was shown on Irish television. Since 2012 Robert has written an award-winning blog called *The Irish Aesthete* chronicling Ireland's architectural heritage. An exhibition of his photographs was held in the Irish Architectural Archive in December 2022 and in May 2024 a book – *The Irish Aesthete: Buildings of Ireland, Lost and Found* - was published by Lilliput Press.



Wexford Opera House on waterfront

The Itinerary

Day 1 London to Dublin, Ireland. Fly by scheduled flight. On arrival a drive of just over an hour brings us to Marfield House, on the outskirts of Gorey, a busy Wexford historic market town. Meet this evening for drinks and dinner in the hotel. (D)

Day 2 Killruddery & Kilmacurragh Botanic Garden. After breakfast drive to Killruddery House for a private tour of the house. Being a home, the atmosphere is special as are the interiors including elaborate chimney-pieces by Giacinto Micali, crimson silk damask from Spitalfields and stained glass by John Milner. Outside, the French formal gardens are deemed one of the finest examples on the island. After a light lunch in the Tea Room with its lovely views across the Formal Gardens to the distant Sugar Loaf Mountain, we drive south to Kilmacurragh Botanic Garden. Set around the ruins of a fine Queen Anne style house lie the 52 acres of wild Robinsonian gardens established in 1712 and further expanded in the 19th century. The climatic conditions and soil here have resulted in a high success rate of new species and since taking over the site in 1996, the National Botanic Gardens of Ireland have performed a marvellous restoration. Following our visit take the short drive back to Marfield where we will have dinner at the hotel this evening. (B, L, D)

Day 3 Farmleigh House & Russborough House. Drive into the wide expanses of Phoenix Park and the official Irish State Guest House. Farmleigh



Wexford Opera House

Interior, Russborough House

Marfield House Hotel Gardens

Marfield House Kitchen Garden

for a performance of *The Magic Fountain*, a rather neglected work by Frederick Delius. (B, L, D)

Day 5 Huntingdon Castle & Wexford Opera. Following a leisurely breakfast, drive to nearby County Carlow and the ancient seat of the Esmonde family, Huntingdon Castle. Now occupied by the Durdin Robertsons, descendants of the Esmondas, the castle dates to the 14th century when it was a stronghold and abbey. The current structure dates to 1625 and as with all Irish castles there are a wealth of stories and tales. After some refreshments drive back to Marfield where there will be some time to relax before a late lunch. Later this afternoon we will head back to Wexford Opera House for this evening's performance of *'Le Trouvere'*. This is a rare opportunity to hear Verdi's French version of *Il Trovatore* which includes the addition of ballet music as well as adjustments to the score. A light buffet will be served at the hotel on our return. (B L D*)

Day 6 Dublin to London. Check out after breakfast and return to Dublin Airport for our scheduled flight to London. (B)

was formerly one of the residences of the Guinness family and its stunning location is in an elevated position above the River Liffey. Originally a small Georgian House, it was purchased by Cecil Guinness in 1873 and was subsequently significantly extended in the following decades. Its great charm lies in the eclecticism of its interior decoration ranging in from the classical style to Jacobean, Louis XVI and Georgian. After a private tour we depart for Russborough House and learn of its fascinating history that spans three centuries of social and political intrigue with engaging tales of fine art collectors and collecting. Russborough is unique, designed and built to unrivalled standards. It has been the home to three families and because of their love for the house it has survived, largely unaltered since the 18th century. After lunch in the Courtyard Café a guided tour of the house will include the Beit Collection, one of Ireland's most notable ensembles of fine and decorative arts. (B, L, D)

Day 4 Woodville House & Wexford Opera House. After a busy day yesterday we will have a morning free to relax and enjoy the comforts of Marfield House or explore the town of Gorey. After lunch in the hotel drive to New Ross and nearby Woodville House in its beautiful setting above the River Barrow. This fine Georgian House was built around 1800 and has been owned by five generations of the Roche family since 1876. There are splendid gardens and a working farm, and the current owner Gerald Roche will greet us and arrange a tour of the house followed by refreshments. Then on to Wexford and from the quayside we walk the narrow lanes to the Opera House. Enjoy a pre performance dinner at the restaurant at the top of the theatre which has picturesque views of the harbour before taking our seats

PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

	Price
Standard Room	£2995
Classic Room	£3195
Junior State Room	£3395
State Room	£3595
Pond Suite	£3795
Master Suite	£4195
Small Single Room	£3295
Standard Room for sole occupancy	£3995
Classic Room for sole occupancy	£4195

PRICE INCLUDES: Economy class scheduled air travel • Five nights hotel accommodation at Marfield House Hotel • Meals as indicated (B - Breakfast, L - Lunch, D - Dinner, D* - Light Post-Opera Buffet) • Wine, beer or soft drinks with each included lunch and dinner • Excursions as described • Two performances at Wexford Opera Festival • Guest Speaker • Tour Leader • Gratuities • Transfers • Airport taxes.

Not Included: Travel insurance.



Exterior of Marlfield House

MARLFIELD HOUSE

Marlfield House is a stunningly elegant period hotel which is set in 36 acres of lovely gardens and woodland. All the suites and rooms, both in the main house and scattered around the garden are of the highest standard, individually styled with love and attention and those in the house are furnished with antiques and paintings. As you would expect of a hotel of this standard the cuisine is multi award winning offering classical French and Mediterranean influenced food in the flower filled Turner style conservatory overlooking the garden. On some evenings we will dine in the Duck Restaurant, a more relaxed dining experience in one of the restored courtyard buildings overlooking the kitchen garden. Ireland is famous for its many great hotels and Marlfield House is certainly one of them and a perfect base for our escorted tour.

Your Accommodation

All of the bedrooms are uniquely decorated with rich fabrics and elegant furnishings and have marble bathrooms, king sized double or twin beds, and many overlook the garden or the lake. They are furnished with carefully chosen antiques and paintings and have Voya toiletries, Frette linen, oversized bathrobes with slippers, hairdryers, iron & ironing board, Wi-Fi, televisions and radios. Bottled water and fresh fruit await guests on arrival. The majority of the Single, Standard and Classic Rooms are on the first and second floors which are only accessible by stairs. The State Rooms are located on the ground floor.

Single Room

The Single Rooms overlook the gardens and courtyard and are small and cosy in character. They feature a double bed and an en-suite bathroom with a walk-in shower. They are on the first and second floor of the house.

Standard Room

The charming Standard Rooms overlook the gardens and courtyard and measuring 15 square metres, are cosy in character. They feature an en-suite bathroom with either a walk-in shower with separate bath or a shower over bath, a seating area and everything one would expect in a fine country house. They are on the first and second floor of the house.



Classic Room



Standard Room



Junior State Room – The French Room

Classic Room

The comfortable Classic Rooms overlook the gardens and courtyard and measuring 23 square metres, they have a classical antique finish. They feature an en-suite marble bathroom with either a walk-in shower with separate bath or a shower over bath, a seating area and are furnished with carefully chosen fabrics. They are on the ground, 1st and 2nd floor of the house.

Junior State Room

The two Junior State Rooms measure 36 square metres and are beautifully decorated with rich fabrics and fine antique furniture. The rooms have an en-suite marble bathroom with walk-in shower and separate bath, a seating area, and doors that open on to the garden.

State Room

State Rooms measure between 45 and 52 square metres and feature a separate seating area with a period marble fireplace with gas fire and large marble bathrooms with walk-in shower and separate bath. The antiques and furnishings have been thoughtfully selected and truly reflect an era of gracious living. All three staterooms are completely different in style and décor and have views of the garden or lake.

Master Suite

The elegant and stately Master Suite, known as The Print Room, measures 68 square metres and is beautifully decorated. The walls are adorned with paintings and prints and the room contains fine antiques. It overlooks the Knot Garden where guests can sit and enjoy breakfast, afternoon tea or a cocktail. The king size bed which can be made as a twin, is set in an alcove and a panelled octagonal dressing room leads to the elegant marble bathroom with large jacuzzi bath, walk in shower and twin sinks.

Pond Suites

Separate to the manor house, the Pond Suites are located overlooking the pond in a lush, wooded setting of mature oak trees and ferns, approximately 150 metres from the house. Encompassing large open plan interiors of 50 square metres with patio doors onto a private terrace, they are the epitome of a modern, luxurious country house experience in the most private of settings. A large bathroom with a free-standing bath sits under a round picture window, walk-in shower, double sinks & separate WC. A golf buggy is available on request to transport you to the main house.



The Restaurant



Master Suite – The Print Room



State Room – The Georgian Room



Reception Hall



Pond Suites - The Fox Suite



The Duck Restaurant

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Our current booking conditions apply to all reservations and are available on request.
Cover image: Russborough House and Parklands.