

# Irish Examiner

Magic of Aherlow

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Joe Dermody enjoys a peaceful break in the Glen of Aherlow, Tipperary.



COUNTRY walks rarely offer the escaping urban dweller the depth of peace and repose to be found along the well developed trails on the Tipperary side of the Galtee Mountains.

A family enjoying an active, outdoor break of even a few nights in this healing place will return to the daily 9-to-5 puffed full of energy and enthusiasm, and a spirit recharged by simple pleasures.

## FIRST IMPRESSIONS:

A first-time visitor to the Aherlow House Hotel & Lodges, I very quickly understood why so many tourists refer to it as an obligatory stop for anyone visiting Ireland. The hotel is a breathtaking, lush (and surprisingly affordable) gem. The approach roads create an equally strong first impression. Rich woodlands await the visitor from the second you leave the busy neighbouring town of Cahir or Tipperary, depending on your angle of approach, and enter the Glen of Aherlow, arrested by the calming speed bumps of smaller towns like Bansha or Galbally. When you reach calm crossroads such as Mourne Abbey or Lisvernane, urban cares are already a distant memory.

### THE ROOM:

We stayed in one of the Aherlow House lodges, a spacious three-bedroom affair with an open plan living space ideal for a breakaway family holiday. As it happens, we invited a friend and still found it very roomy, even with six of us enjoying the warmth of the log fire for a night-cap at the end of each thoroughly enjoyable day.

The lodges come with every mod con, flat screen TV, DVDs, washing machine, fridge and more kitchen tools than we're normally accustomed to on weekend staycations. The lodge's rooms are elegant, spacious, spotlessly clean, and the master bedroom even has a balcony that overlooks low-lying woodlands. The grounds are landscaped and charming.

A mild rain falls before we head up to the hotel for food, but as we exit the front door of our lodge, we see our host strolling towards us carrying four umbrellas, which we are invited to use for the duration of our stay. She also gives us discardable plastic capes for our walks the next day. Do we feel welcome? Yes. Cared for? Yes, every need is seen to and all done without any sense of being overwhelmed or suffocated.

### THE FOOD:

As you might expect from a hotel that is a favourite for quality weddings, conferences and banquets, the food is really excellent. On our first night, we opt to stay in the bar, whose reasonably priced menu is available from 12 noon to 9.30pm. Our various selections of steak, salad, pasta and fish dishes all go down a treat, as do the hot ports for the adults and the teenagers' hot chocolates. We dined in the stylish restaurant on our second night; the experience is truly magnificent, and will live long in the memory.

The hotel's Winter package offers a good insight into the quite astonishing value on offer here. For €129 per person sharing, Aherlow House offers two nights accommodation, with full Irish breakfast each morning, dinner on one evening in the Treetop Restaurant, a hot toddy each, and a warm picnic (full of warming food and drink) to take with you when exploring the area.