



Above: Ballygally Castle recently celebrated its 4 star award.

Opposite Page: The castle sits in Ballygally Bay, overlooking the sea.

# Ballygally Castle

An enchanting Irish retreat with a hypnotic seaview

It is not often that I get an opportunity to highlight some of the most scenic coastline on the shores of Northern Ireland. The Antrim Coast Road runs between Larne and Ballycastle forming part of the main A2 coast road; it was built by William Bald between 1832 and 1842 to replace the Old Irish Highway, originally called the

Grand Military Way.

On the coast road, Ballygally Castle is located just 26 miles from Belfast, north of Larne, ideal if you are travelling by ferry via Larne to Ireland. The castle over looks the soft, sandy beaches of Ballygally Bay and on a clear day you can see Scotland.

The castle dates back to 1625 and is unique in that it is the only 17th century building

still used as a residence in Northern Ireland today. The hotel is reputedly haunted by a friendly ghost and brave guests can visit the 'ghost room' in one of the towers to see for themselves.

This enchanting hotel is full of character and charm and was awarded its prestigious 4 star status by the Northern Ireland Tourist Board in May 2007, follow-



ing an extensive £3 million investment and refurbishment programme. The hotel has 44 bedrooms and many of the castle's original features and antique furnishings give it a unique welcoming atmosphere. The Antrim Suite with its spectacular panoramic views of Ballygally Bay is certainly a room with a view.

The famous "Nine Glens of Antrim" and the Giant's

For golfers, Royal Portrush and Portstewart Golf Club are within easy reach. Those of you who have a head for heights, Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge spanning a chasm some eighty feet deep. My favourite and certainly one for the kids is the majesty and mystery of the Giant's Causeway, a must for a family day out. You will get to know the gentle giant called Finn

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Causeway are near at hand and the superb scenery can be enjoyed from many coastal and glen walks. Whether you want to celebrate a special occasion or just get away from it all and relax in style, Ballygally Castle has a lot to offer.

MacCool, which is always good fun!

Prices start from £145 for bed and breakfast with the Antrim Suite at £250, both based on 2 people sharing.

[www.celticcastles.com/castles/ballygally-castle/](http://www.celticcastles.com/castles/ballygally-castle/)

## Local Attractions



### Dunluce Castle

This spectacular castle crowned crag on the famous north Antrim coast was shaped when the sea cut deep into the land, exploiting cracks on either side of the rock.



### Carrickfergus Castle

Carrickfergus was a thriving town when Belfast was a sandbank. When Henry II was king of England, the Norman John de Courcy had overthrown the kings of the north of Ireland and established his rule from Carlingford Lough up the east coast as far as Fair Head. In 1180 he built a massive keep to guard the approach to Belfast Lough at Carrickfergus - the first real Irish castle. In the early 17th century, Carrickfergus was the only place in the north where English was spoken; Gaelic was still the language of Ulster.