

Built entirely out of blue limestone and beautifully restored in the 19th century, Dromoland Castle was originally the ancestral home of the O'Briens, Barons of Inchiquin and one of the few native Gaelic families of royal blood.



# REGAL *Romance*

NOTHING SAYS "LUCK OF THE IRISH" LIKE A BONA FIDE CASTLE HOTEL

From spectacular backdrops for popping the question to idyllic resorts along the Irish Whiskey Trail, these five-star Irish destinations promise to be unforgettable and fit for a modern king (and his queen). — *Mona Buehler*

## A Proposal Worth a Thousand Words

For the suitor seeking a bit of guidance, Dromoland Castle's "Ultimate Proposal Package" includes two nights in a Signature Suite, spa treatments, champagne and full Irish breakfasts. And the *pièce de résistance*? When the moment strikes, the groom-to-be may signal a hand-trained falcon to deliver the ring. Then a private helicopter

whisks the lovebirds to the Cliffs of Moher, a breathtaking limestone palisade ascending 1,220 feet above the Atlantic Ocean. Afterward, they celebrate with a romantic, private dinner under the stars in the idyllic Temple of Mercury on the grounds of Lough Dromoland. Packages from \$2,450 per person, available through September.



## Dromoland Castle

Officer Mike Biggs and Molly Flynn's (Billy Gardell and Melissa McCarthy, below) budding romance on *Mike & Molly* definitely shows promise for a happily ever after, and when he's ready to tell his girl that she's The One, the legendary and romantic Dromoland Castle can help with orchestrating the ultimate fairy-tale proposal.

After a scenic drive, stunning turrets amid lush green landscapes, a secret garden and picturesque lake will certainly take her breath away as she approaches this grand neo-Gothic fortress. Step inside and the Gaelic charm continues with exquisite furnishings, traditional antiques, crystal chandeliers, splendid wood and stone carvings, medieval suits of armor, tapestries and original ancestral portraits adorning the walls. The estate boasts 99 spacious guest rooms, notably 14 elaborate suites in the main house, all richly appointed with four-poster beds, antique Hepplewhite armoires, Louis XV furniture, striking tall windows and intimate seating and dining areas. The castle's ultradeluxe rooms overlook the lake and Dromoland Gardens, and have hosted celebrities including Bono, John Travolta and Demi Moore. The regal dining experience continues at award-winning Earl of Thomond, where elaborate oak wainscoting, harp music and executive chef David McCann's delectable French fare will romance all the senses. [dromoland.ie](http://dromoland.ie)



**MIKE & MOLLY**

airs Mondays at 9:30 p.m. ET/PT on CBS

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## Ashford Castle

The romance, turrets and towers continue along the shores of Lough Corrib and the River Cong, where the famed and fancy Ashford Castle promises more Irish wonder.

Pierce Brosnan held his wedding at the estate in 2001, and after beholding the 350 acres and spectacular backdrop of woodlands, gardens and mountains, it's no wonder this regal retreat has become the "it" wedding destination. When finally tying the knot with his future wife, sweet and sentimental Ted Mosby (Josh Radnor, above) would fall in love with all the romantic possibilities of the castle hotel—including Waterford chandeliers,

open fireplaces, classical art, antique furniture and marble baths among the grand staterooms and suites. This, coupled with golf, horseback riding, falconry school, a first-class spa and culinary delights, and we're confident the *How I Met Your Mother* gang would welcome a luxurious Irish escape for Ted's legendary nuptials with open arms.

[ashford.ie](http://ashford.ie)

## The Merrion

Named No. 1 hotel in Dublin and one of the "World's Best Hotels" by *Condé Nast Traveler*, The Merrion perfectly blends European sophistication and Irish charm. If *Rules of Engagement's* Russell Dunbar (David Spade, right) hadn't lost his plump trust fund, he'd be a perfect candidate to opulently spend and court some unsuspecting lady in the capital—especially at the only two-Michelin-starred dining in Ireland, Restaurant Patrick Guilbaud. Here, dishes such as croquettes of suckling pig, annagassan blue lobster and venison loin poached in mulled wine will tickle the palate.

Perhaps, instead, Dexter Morgan might treat his new nanny Sonya and son Harrison to a relaxing trip to her motherland—sans the romance—and simply indulge in the privacy and peace such luxury escapes afford. She deserves a little pampering after all her continued aid and grace (despite a chronically absent Daddy)—and the stunningly appointed rooms, crackling turf fires, Thethra spa and five-star service are just what the doctor ordered. [merrionhotel.com](http://merrionhotel.com)



Clockwise from top right: The gardens at Castlemartyr Resort; the Knights Bar at Castlemartyr; the grand Oakhall entrance at Ashford Castle.



## Castlemartyr Resort

Hotel mogul Chuck Bass (Ed Westwick, left)

knows deluxe accommodations and has developed a penchant for the suite life. When the *Gossip Girl* heartthrob yearns for inspiration—and a chance to rekindle romance with a certain someone—a visit to a grand Irish manor house bristling with Old World luxury should help him return with a jig in his step. Nestled in the rolling countryside of County Cork sits five-star Castlemartyr Resort, a classic 18th-century manor

house that boasts 109 deluxe guest rooms, a Ron Kirby-designed golf course and a world-class spa featuring "tailor-made" renewal treatments. For ultimate Irish charm, spring for the Manor House staterooms and suites in the main house. Not to be missed? Admiring the ornate rococo ceiling over a rare whiskey nightcap at The Knights Bar. [castlemartyrresort.ie](http://castlemartyrresort.ie)

### EDITOR'S PICK

#### THE IRELAND WHISKEY TRAIL

A visit to Ireland wouldn't be complete without whiskey exploration. Whether you wish to tour a distillery (we love The Old Distillery and Jameson Experience in Midleton) or cozy up in a traditional pub, Heidi Donelon's smart whiskey tourism site has got you covered with maps, guides, master classes and more. [irelandwhiskeytrail.com](http://irelandwhiskeytrail.com)

