

27. Waterford Castle



Where: The Island, Waterford.

Why: Is this the prettiest approach to a hotel in Ireland? Two minutes is all the ferry crossing takes to whisk you to a private island in the River Suir, but it feels like a clean break with the real world. Under new ownership since 2015, Waterford Castle has come on leaps and bounds — from behind-the-scenes stabilisation works to eye-catching details like the beautiful bar ceiling (with splashes of mint green and gold leaf) to Carrera marble floors in suite bathrooms. The Great Hall is a standout space, with a huge fireplace anchoring the Elizabethan oak paneling. Proceed from there to sip a local Blackwater Gin and tonic in the bar, before treating yourself to Tom Spruce's cooking in the Munster Room (his riffs on Comeragh lamb are a highlight). There are dozens of lodges and a golf course on the island too, but the 19-bed castle is our first choice. — PÓC

Insider Tip: The castle can be exclusively booked (Kodaline's Jason Boland married Etain Corr there in '17).