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Sheen Falls Lodge in Ireland's County Kerry - Delight for Nature Explorers - Luxe Beat Magazine

8–10 minutes

A special blend of Emerald Isle hospitality greets visitors at [Sheen Falls Lodge](#), a lush five-star countryside hideaway just outside the storybook town of [Kenmare](#) in the southwestern corner of Ireland. Culinary magic, more than a bit of pampering, graded hiking and equestrian trails, hands-on falconry, fly-fishing, golf, and access to some of the best cycling and touring in Ireland, make the 77-room accommodations an ideal base for exploring the natural splendor of the region.

Nestled off Ireland's southwestern rugged and rocky coastline, Sheen Falls (a Relais & Chateaux member property) made for a week-long getaway for me and my wife earlier this spring. Situated high on a bluff overlooking the River Sheen and Kenmare Bay, the property extends to 300 acres of rolling countryside, woodlands, majestic coastline, and open fields.

After crossing the pond into Shannon Airport, we rented a car and headed out for the 2.5 hour drive that took us through Limerick, south and west past Tralee, around Killarney and into Kenmare.





Aerial view, Kenmare Town, Co Kerry. Photo courtesy Visit Ireland

The drive (on the left side of the road, of course) to County Kerry, Ireland's fabled agricultural heavyweight, was scenic with small, family-run farms dotting the countryside and tidy towns and villages punctuating the route with colorful storefronts, public houses, and challenging to navigate roundabouts where uncertainty ruled as to who was supposed to yield way to whom.

We arrived unscathed midday after a noon landing at the airport and the bellman upon greeting us sensed I'd had my fill of left sided driving. He opened the drivers' side door and softly counseled, "You're in good hands now lad, I'll take over from here." More welcome words were never spoken.

Warm familiarity

There's a warm familiarity upon entering Sheen Falls. Local Kenmare artist [Christine Bowen's](#) mural fills the entire wall at reception, drawing guests into a floral mash-up of the nearby Kelly-green hills, country gardens, rivers, and streams. The artist's works are shown throughout the property in a collaboration that

emphasizes the Irish-country-craft design and are both whimsical and engaging.



Local Kenmare artist Christine Bowen's mural welcomes guests to Sheen Falls. Photo courtesy Sheen Falls Lodge

Small individual design elements add up to a whole greater than the sum of its parts here as touches such as West Cork crafted furniture, locally weaved wicker baskets both decorative and functional, fine Irish linens, artisan chocolates by local maker [Lorge](#), and locally made ceramic vases and serving pieces all subtly remind us we're experiencing the best of the Irish countryside.





Some of the best fly fishing in Ireland is right outside your door at Sheen Falls Lodge. Photo courtesy Sheen Falls Lodge

Local truly shines on Sheen Falls' tables where we were never far from bounty from land and sea. Stables, the recently established brasserie serves unfussy yet sophisticated contemporary Irish fare all day long. Dinner found us enjoying simple Cod Beignets (think light and airy fritters) accompanied by pickled cucumber, radish and dill served atop a house-made crab mayonnaise. Seafood Chowder came next in a luxurious cream base that boasted potatoes, leeks, parsley, and smoked haddock. We split a tureen of local mussels plump, garlicky and steamed in white wine and butter. The vibe here is casual and cozy where you're encouraged to linger over a Guinness, or a martini made with Dingle (amongst Ireland's finest) gin.

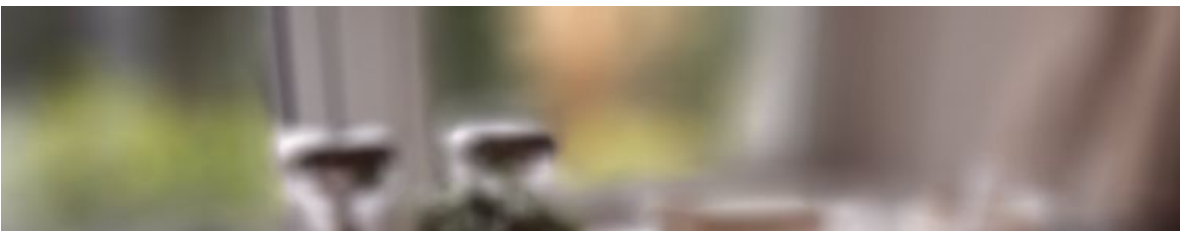




The Falls Restaurant view overlooks the signature falls. Photo courtesy Sheen Falls Lodge



Cod Beignets. Photo by Michael J. Solender





The full Irish breakfast won't leave you hungry. Photo by Michael J. Solender

Sheen Falls' fine dining venue, The Falls, delivers both on its namesake view of the Sheen River rapids and falls dashing past the Lodge and gardens. Fare here is classic-continental offerings in a contemporary style with the freshest proteins, light sauces and reductions and produce harvested mere hours before service. One evening my wife Harriet and I enjoyed the three-course prix-fixe

menu featuring starters such as Castletownbere Scallops with Heirloom Carrot, Orange, Coriander, a main of Spring Mountain Lamb, and an Apple Shortbread dessert that was (almost) too beautiful to tear into.

The elegant dining area also doubles as the breakfast room, where made to order daily treats include full Irish breakfast with bangers, bacon, blood pudding, porridge, eggs Benedict, Irish brown soda bread toast, pastries, and fresh berries.

We needed hearty sustenance as we filled each day with nearby fun adventures. A few of our favorites:

Engaging Hawk Walk

No relationship better defines the Irishman's deep abiding respect for nature than that of the falconer and their birds of prey. We had a most engaging experience with [Falconry Kerry's](#) founder Liam Regan, a licensed falconer and wildlife biologist who hosts privately arranged Hawk Walks at Sheen Falls Lodge.

Regan met us one misty morning on the periphery of the property where we came to know three of his star raptors – each eager to demonstrate their magnificent regal air and soaring prowess.

Regan explained he has well over a dozen different birds, most raised from chicks and each with a distinctive personality.

Harriet took an immediate fancy for Khaleesi, a tricolor earth-toned Harris Hawk who worked with us for a half hour or so. “If your eyesight was as sharp as hers,” Regan said, “You’d be able to read a newspaper at 100 yards.” After donning the leather falconer’s glove Harriet was given a small piece of raw chicken to rest on her hand and Khaleesi, now released from her cage and

resting on a mighty oak in the distance, swooped in upon a voice command. She initially drafted close to the ground, her wings extended and then climbed to shoulder level where she landed upon Harriet's glove hand and gobbled down her reward.



Liam Regan of Falconry Kerry loves to share his knowledge with guests. Photo Courtesy Sheen Falls Lodge

Touring the Ring of Kerry & Beara Peninsula

Irish coastlines are made for touring and culture, history and natural splendor await those who venture out the fabled Ring of Kerry and the less (tourist) traveled [Beara Peninsula](#). We did both (with a guide/driver) and felt we were inside of a postcard as we navigated the Isle.

Each curve in the road brings another vista of Mother Nature's handiwork, revealing what centuries-ago glaciers and icefields long kept hidden. Row after row of stone fences marked properties

hosting lamb-bearing sheep and dairy cattle whose milk would soon transform into butter, cheese, or yogurt with the distinctive Irish tang. Ocean views spied shellfish farmers harvesting briny muscles from ocean “fields” that lay immediately off the coast in protected bays. Bounty from the sea are as we’d learn, are the true star players of Ireland’s [Wild Atlantic Way](#) – the longest coastal touring route on the globe at more than 2,000 kilometers in total.

Highlights along the [Ring of Kerry](#) included the heart-pounding views atop the Kerry Cliffs, a half-day diversion at Killarney National Park where forest bathing and bird watching are favored past times, Muckross Abby, an ecclesiastical site undergoing major restoration, Skellings Chocolate Factory at St. Finians Bay, and the Valentia Transatlantic Cable Station, where the initial attempts to link communication and data lines between Europe and North America began in 1857.





Kerry Cliffs. Photo by Michael J. Solender

We took a bit slower pace along the Beara Peninsula stopping to hike by massive waterfalls and an inland lake at [Gleninchiquin Park](#), attempt to ride the Dursey Cable Car (it was closed on our visit) to Dursey Island for whale and dolphin watching off the island, a fine lunch of Fish Pie and a stout at [Oneill's Pub in Allihies](#), County Cork, and learn of the region's rich history from our fine guide.



Cozy public spaces welcome guests. Photo courtesy Sheen Falls Lodge

One final discovery we made on our last evening at Sheen Falls Lodge made us both sad and hopeful, a week here is not enough – we're already penciling dates for our return.

Feature photo: Sheen Falls Lodge rests on 300 acres of Irish countryside. Photo Courtesy Sheen Falls Lodge