

LUXURY TRAVEL ADVISOR

Five Questions With: K Club General Manager Michael Davern

by [Matt Turner](#) | May 2, 2018 11:38am



Continuing our "Five Questions With" series, *Luxury Travel Advisor* spoke with Michael Davern, general manager of the K Club in Ireland. Among what's new at the hotel includes a two-hour and two-day kayak experience, a bike path and cycle tours throughout the countryside. Davern also tells us that guests can enjoy views of the property from a 1936 La Riviera Jaguar, which the hotel uses for private transportation (it's one of Davern's don't-miss amenities at the hotel).

Guests who book the private home, the Straffan House, can now opt for what The K Club is calling the Mindfulness Mansion. It's a comprehensive wellness getaway, exclusively available for guests staying in the Straffan House, which includes healthy culinary options (Vegan? Just notify the hotel!) and an oxygen tent, where guests can receive special spa treatments with increased oxygen to help them recover. For guests staying in the main building, the K Club has partnered with Natura Bisse at its spa. Davern spills on the remaining news...

1. What's the Most Interesting Thing Going on at The K Club Right Now?

One of the things that we're planning and working on at the moment is, we're doing Taste of Kildare, which is a food celebration of the local area. We're going to host it at the hotel, inside in the garden. We're going to bring local restaurants, food purveyors and artisan producers, as well as local entertainment, like Irish musicians. It'll be an all-day food festival.

In Ireland, the food is fantastic. The availability of fresh produce is just incredible. I think we (natives of Ireland) are so used to it that we don't really tell people about it too much. We know the name of the beef. We know the name of the cow. We know the farmer. We know where it comes from. That's just Ireland.

Note: The Taste of Kildare festival is going to take place August 19. Hotel guests receive free admission, while non-hotel guests will have paid entrance.



2. What Are Three Activities I Must Do On-Property?

I would say if you were staying on property, you'd definitely want to go kayaking on the river. It's new. We've never really done it before, and we've just started doing it now. The largest kayak race in Ireland used to start at the back of the hotel by the fountain—over 2,500 kayaks would go up the River Liffey, up to Dublin. It takes about two and a half hours in the race.

For some reason, we never offered it before. Suddenly we've said, "Why don't we do kayaking?" We've got wonderful people at the hotel who are experts in kayaking. We have kayaks, now, in the Boathouse. We take people out—book it in advance—and they can go just around the estate if they wanted. There's enough to do just going up and down our river or they can go all the way into Dublin. It's a fabulous activity. That's one to definitely do.

Another one I'd definitely do is, I'd drive down to the pub (The Straffan Inn, located on property) in our house 1936 La Riviera Jaguar and pour a pint of Guinness, because I just think that's fantastic and great fun.

The last things, then, that somebody should do are the Irish coffee making demonstration or the whiskey tasting. But I think the key one for us on our property, because it's so unique, would be

to do the wine cellar tour and actually go through the history of the wines, because of the connection between Bordeaux, France, and our original owners, the Barton wine family. You could follow any of those with an art tour on property.

3. You've Recently Introduced the Mindfulness Mansion—Is There a New Focus on Wellness at the Hotel?



Yeah. We stopped to think and lately you can see that people are very interested in these areas. We have [wellness offerings] in abundance, so we sat back and said, "Right, we need to really explain this better and let people use these facilities." We have a beautiful arboretum with trees that are 300 years old that you can walk along. We sort of take it for granted, because we know the trees are there, but we think, "Well, everybody will walk out and see the trees."

There's a lot of people who would absolutely love to be told that that exists, then come and stay and walk the property with an expert. We have a tree walk that you can go along with a map, and you can look at the history of a tree and so on. Being one with nature is really, really important now. People have busy lives. It's important to have activities and things that will actually make people—particularly kids—want to leave their mobile phone or a game and actually go and do something that's really interesting, educational and just a real experience.

4. Have You Seen an Increase in Travel to Ireland in Recent Years? Why?

There's an enormous increase in travel to Ireland from the United States, in particular. One of the key issues for America going to Ireland is obviously access—there's some fantastic access to Ireland.

Ireland has captured the imagination an awful lot in America. People are realizing that it's English speaking, it's very friendly towards the United States but then I think you have the air access

coming in from LA, Boston, Chicago. It's very accessible. People understand that they can get there in six hours. They could spend two or three days there and immerse themselves in a completely different environment with Irish people in places like Ireland's Ancient East.

Food's another reason. I think a lot of people are really shocked by how they never would have anticipated or thought that Ireland was a place that had great culinary features and variety. They're just blown away by it. We have fresh salmon and we have oysters; we have cheeses. All of these Irish cheeses are just as good—or better—than most of the others we hear about around the world.

Then there's the outdoors, which is great for hiking. It's a great country.

5. Where Are You Traveling Next for Leisure? Where Would You Like to Visit?



I'm going down to San Diego, and I can't say that it's going to be work all the time, to be honest. I'm going to the Preferred Global Conference. That's leisure. In my book, that's leisure.

But where will I travel next for leisure? I don't really have any plans at the moment but, if I did, the likelihood is that it'd be a quick trip. If it is, then I'd go down to the coast in Ireland down to a place called Dunmore East. If I have time this year, I will absolutely go down to Kerry and go out to Skellig Michael, which was in Star Wars [Episode VII: The Force Awakens and Episode VIII: The Last Jedi]. I've never been on Skellig Michael and now, of course, the whole world's seen it on the screen, so I want to walk on it myself and bring my kids there and stand on Skellig Michael.

I think that we've got to do it [soon] because there's a huge danger that it's become so popular that it might actually close down. You might not be able to get there in the future, because it's history just absolutely has to be preserved no matter what. It's a UNESCO World Heritage Site. They're going to be very careful about protecting that down the road.

It's amazing to see it. Now that—if you want mindfulness—that's a place. Imagine sitting there on the top of that and think about all the monks that lived there all their lives. That's amazing, isn't it?

Note: We're told that if you want to visit Skellig Michael, the weather is very important as there are no docks. Visitor boats leave in the morning from the town of Portmagee.