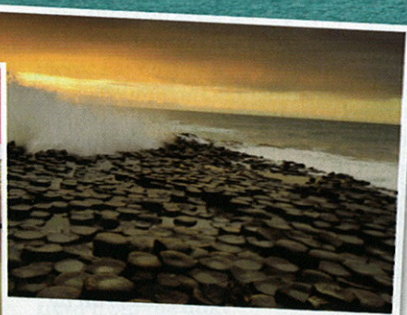
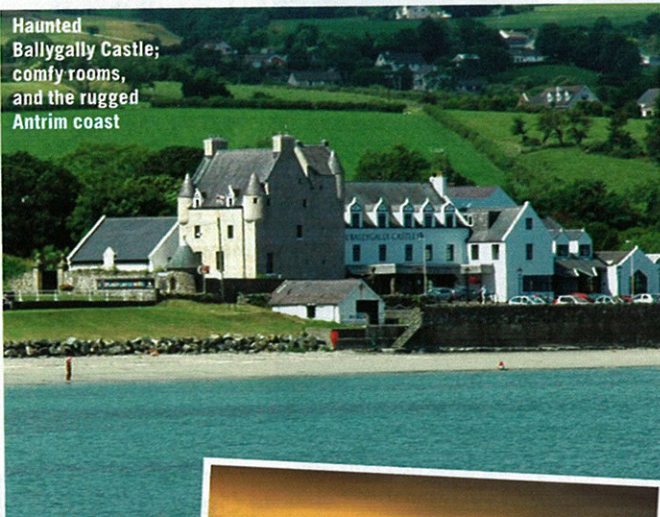


Haunted Ballygally Castle; comfy rooms, and the rugged Antrim coast



The stunning Giant's Causeway

## Haunted castle

**B**allygally Castle on the beautiful Antrim coast in Northern Ireland is rumoured to be haunted by several ghosts. But fortunately for sensitive types our stay wasn't too spooky.

The turrets date back to the 17th Century but the castle has been restored, and although you feel as though you're staying somewhere very old, the decor is clean and modern.

The location offers views of rugged cliffs and the sparkling Atlantic, and sand so white you could be forgiven for thinking you're abroad.

After a busy day sightseeing – a boat trip to Rathlin Island and a tour of the Bushmills

Whiskey Distillery – the huge, comfy rooms at our hotel were very welcome indeed. Food at the hotel was absolutely delicious – fresh, and local.

The final stop on our mini-tour was the Giant's Causeway, a series of rock columns formed by a volcanic eruption 60 millions ago. Breathtaking. *SN*

### Getting there

Rooms at Ballygally Castle start from £40 B&B per person, per night. For more details about Ballygally Castle and for bookings, visit [hastingshotels.com](http://hastingshotels.com). For more information on other castles to visit in Ireland, see [discoverireland.com](http://discoverireland.com).

## Relaxing on the river

**G**oing on a canal boat holiday has always appealed but I found the idea daunting. My partner was keen so we decided to take the plunge and enlisted two other crew members.

At the Anglo-Welsh base in Oxford, our guide showed us to our modern, 48-foot narrow boat, the Sun Dance, before giving us a safety briefing and demo. Points noted, we stocked up on provisions and set off along the picturesque stretch of the upper Thames. Getting used to the steering didn't take long and soon we were chugging along at a leisurely four miles an hour, taking in the views.

We took it in turns to steer, cruising past lock-keepers' cottages and meadows and making regular stops for a walk or a visit to a canal-side pub.

The whole experience was extremely relaxing, even negotiating the locks was easier than we had anticipated. We were impressed by the onboard facilities, too. The kitchen had everything we needed to rustle up breakfast and the beds were cosy.

The trip was the perfect antidote to city life, and reminded us that the UK has so much countryside to offer. We're already talking about where to go next. *LH*

### Getting there

A weekend break on a four-berth canal boat starts from £466 in September. For more details, call 0117 304 1122 or visit [anglowelsh.co.uk](http://anglowelsh.co.uk).



Ahoy there!



A peaceful lock on the River Thames

- No push
- A person
- No jargon
- Free P&I