

Hotel Review

Surprisingly for an island, there are not that many places to stay in Ireland which are set right on the sea – or if they are, they sometimes have so many triple-glazed windows and balconies, it can be hard to feel a connection with the water.

Not so with The Bayview at Ballycotton, in east Cork, where sea air hits you as soon as you get out of the car and every window is set to make the most of the soothing blue views. This family-owned four-star sits at the top of a small cliff in the village of Ballycotton, overlooking the harbour, the island with its lighthouse, and across the bay.

It's hard to take your eyes off the view, and the whole setting in this quiet end-of-the-road village offers a chance to reconnect with the sea and coast.

Arrival & location

The hotel is in the village of Ballycotton and the first thing you notice when arriving are the terraced gardens leading down to the shore – the odd cordyline palm tree giving a slightly tropical feel. There's lots of parking and a bright, spacious reception area, with big windows here and in the bar and restaurant either side of reception. My check-in was quick and easy. As soon as I arrived, I felt drawn to explore the small gardens and walk to the harbour, just a few minutes down the road. **9/10**

Service & style

Sea views are the main event – the decor in rooms is appropriately minimal. Common areas have a more classic feel, with plush carpets and some antiques dotted around. There's local art on display too, which is for sale – lovely paintings of the harbour and lighthouse when I visited.

The hotel has a rustic charm and the feel of a homely, family-run business rather than somewhere overly sanitised to perfection. As you'd expect with an older hotel, the decor is not perfect but you tend to forgive flaws when a property is right on the sea and probably takes a battering from the elements especially in winter months (Ballycotton suffers regular coastal erosion).

There are also plenty of little nooks to curl up in with a book – each of the hotel's two floors has a guest lounge with comfy armchairs (and sea views, of course) and there are large chairs in the bar area beside full bookshelves (including a copy of *Treasure Island*). **8/10**

Facilities & activities

The hotel doesn't have a pool, but a gorgeous rocky bathing spot is reached via steps down through the gardens. Guests can also use the 25m pool at The Bayview's sister hotel, Garryvoe Hotel, 7km away (a 10-minute drive) which has a leisure centre, sauna, steam room, gym and outdoor hot tub. At Garryvoe Beach, there's also a Coastal Cabin sauna (€15 for 45 mins; coastalcabin.ie) where you can recharge with dips in the sea from the life-guarded beach.

From The Bayview, the Ballycotton Cliff Walk is an out-and-back coastal trail – the full 9.2km takes around three hours, but you can do shorter ambles too. You can also take tours of nearby Ballycotton Lighthouse (ballycotton-seaadventures.com; €30pp) and there are regular gigs and movies at Seachurch restaurant (seachurch.ie). **7/10**

The rooms

The hotel's 35 rooms include superior doubles, classic doubles, twins and one suite. Decor is clean and minimal, with a slightly nautical feel, wood-style floors and soothing blue bedcovers and cushions. All have sea views and superior doubles have Juliette balconies. Each has a Nespresso machine and water is supplied in glass bottles. At night, you can see the red flash of Ballycotton Lighthouse. It's hard to beat falling asleep to the sounds of the sea – I had my balcony doors open and heard some 'early morning traffic' at dawn – the low hum of a fishing boat. **7/10**

Food & drink

Dinner in Capricho is classic Irish food, sourced from local producers. If you're lucky enough to get a window table, you'll have your own little bay window to enjoy the sea views from. The dinner menu (two courses for €58; three for €70) was relatively short, with four options each for starters, mains and desserts. Fish and seafood are to the fore, often from catches freshly landed on the pier.

The Bayview Hotel in Ballycotton, east Cork; and (below) evening views of the sea and lighthouse



A coastal beauty in Ballycotton

Every room at the family-owned Bayview Hotel has a sea view. Guests will also find cosy nooks for reading, a nearby cliff walk, and fresh seafood on a reviving retreat

On my visit, starters were duck liver parfait; figs with thyme goat's cheese and beetroot; seared Wexford scallops or a puff pastry case filled with grilled Ballycotton Dublin Bay prawns. Mains were a panfried breast of Silverhill duck, pan-fried loin of monkfish, roast fillet of beef, or my choice – a roast fillet of John Dory. As with my starter (the figs with goats cheese), the plating of this dish was colourful and creative. The fish was cut into pieces and piled high with peas, green beans, courgettes and tomato, all topped with herbs and drizzled with Valentia Island vermouth sauce. There was a generous side of potatoes with a portion of melted butter and one of rosemary salt.

Wines of the evening were Portuguese – Quinta dos Carvalhais white or Quinta de Chocapalha red (glass €10.50/bottle €42) and there's also a comprehensive list featuring around 78 different wines. **7.5/10**

The bottom line

This is a very special place and will be ideal for guests looking for a restful coastal retreat and a few days of soaking up nature, with good food and a relaxing night's sleep, away from the buzz of a town or a city.

Ballycotton Harbour and lighthouse have guided ships to safety and provided a safe haven for centuries, and this feels like a haven to guide the weary towards a reviving coastal retreat.



Insider tip

Time any swim at the bathing spot for high tide to avoid having to clamber over seaweed-clad rocks.

Accessibility

There are lifts to each floor and one room with an accessible shower. The hotel will work with guests with disabilities to meet their needs. Call 021 464-6746 for more.

Rates

B&B in double rooms from €228 (B&B and dinner offers start from €249pps). Yvonne was a guest of the hotel. thebayviewhotel.com

The rating
7.7/10

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