

# connections

Dublin Airport's passenger magazine

April/May 2007



**Mika**

Pop's Mystery Man

**Ger Loughnane**

Hurling's Great Maverick

**France's Finest**

The Secrets of the Southern Rhone

**Georgina Campbell's**

Top Five Country Retreats

**La Dolce Vita**

The Sweet Life in Turin



# Cavan cool

Gemma Tipton headed for the wilds of Cavan to experience the pleasures of modern country estate living offered by the luxurious Radisson SAS Farnham Estate Hotel & Spa.

I want to live in the countryside. More specifically, I want to live in the Irish countryside. Driving out of the city, it's amazing how quickly the suburbs fall away and rises in the road become rolling hills. Grazing cows and horses take over from housing estates; and the regimented trees of city streets become thickets of woodland, with great oaks commanding views across the landscape. Whenever I leave the city, I begin to breathe more deeply, it's as if relaxation is built into those things that are coloured green (grasslands, hedges, hillsides), just as stress seems rooted in grey (roads, cement, dull city skies). Yeats had it right with his *Lake Isle of Innisfree* – dreaming of linnets' wings and the low sounds of lake water, lapping on the shore as an escape from urban pressures.

It is for this reason that the ideal spa retreats are genuine retreats, places where you can literally leave it all behind you. And with this in mind, the Farnham Estate Hotel in County Cavan, one of Ireland's newest retreats, is perfectly located. Set in the midst of 1,300 acres of parkland, with woods and lakes, Farnham was, until recently, in the continuous ownership of the Maxwell family (who later became the Lords Farnham), for nearly 400 years.



Turning Farnham into a hotel has meant restoring the Great House, and adding wings for bedrooms as well as a state-of-the-art spa. Because it's so new, the planting still needs to grow a little in some of the surrounding landscaping, and the entrance driveway passes through some muddled parts of the estate. All this is forgotten, however, as you sit in one of the lounges in the Great House, sipping a herbal tea (or a glass of wine) beside a log fire, flicking through a magazine, reading a book, or playing one of the board games thoughtfully provided for guests.

Farnham is a mixture of classic and

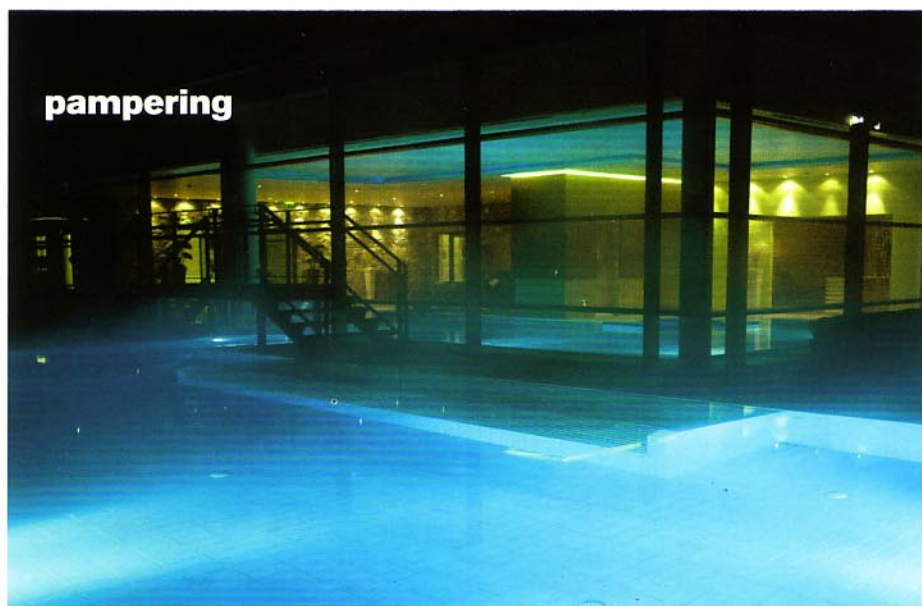
funky, a grand drawing room gives way to a hot pink lounge with a swirl of a sofa that seems to invite a little mischief. The rooms in the new part of the hotel are contemporary – with little twists and touches, like the sliding panel from the bathroom, so that you can sit in the bath and chat to the person in the bedroom, or enjoy the view to the landscape beyond. The best rooms, however, are in the old part of the building and, if you're planning to indulge, it's really worth upgrading to one of the suites, such as the Farnham or the Bedell, where fireplaces, magnificent bathtubs and opulent beds await. ►



**"Farnham is a mixture  
of classic and funky  
that seems to invite a  
little mischief."**







### Highlights

- Breakfast
- The surroundings and particularly the trees (ask reception for a map)
- Suites in Great House part of the hotel
- Infinity pool
- Trilogy Spa Treatments

### What to bring

- Good walking shoes or boots.
- A light mac – you don't want a rain shower to put you off (umbrellas are provided by the hotel).
- Swimsuit.
- Lounging clothes – although you can also lounge in the fluffy white hotel robes.
- Something a little special (though nonetheless casual) to change into for the evening.

### Make the most of it

- Leave your car and your car keys with the hotel staff.
- Leave your wallet behind too. Sign for everything, and forget about money and credit cards for the next couple of days.
- Book your spa treatments in advance, see what's available at [www.farnhamestate.com](http://www.farnhamestate.com). Be adventurous – try something you've never experienced before!
- Take things at your own pace. Go for a walk if you fancy a walk. Have cake if you feel like cake.
- Investigate the extras at the Spa. There are complimentary relaxation, yoga, meditation and aerobics classes. There are also guided yoga walks and afternoon strolls. It's up to you...

If the décor, with its sense of fun and incitement to pleasure, inspires mischief, it's a far cry from Farnham's past, when one of the Lords Farnham once employed a moral agent to oversee the rectitude of his staff. Rectitude is not required these days (thank goodness) although, as with all spa hotels, I could have done with a few more healthy choices on the menu, as beyond breakfast (one of the best selections in Ireland), there is too much to tempt you away from the paths of healthy eating...

While the restaurants may not be so healthy (although there are plans to introduce spa-conscious menus), the spa and the hotel surroundings are an exercise in how to enjoy the process of looking after yourself. Designed to indulge as well as to inspire health and healing, the treatments are so sinfully pleasurable, you almost feel they must be fattening. I enjoyed a Trilogy Treatment (so named for the three zones in the treatment rooms), and had a Farnham Estate Cure. Beginning

with an aromatherapy steam bath, followed by hydrotherapy, a mud wrap, massage, facial and scalp treatment, I afterwards lay on the Tatami bed (a Japanese day bed) so relaxed I wondered if I'd ever move again.

Delicious as that process was, however, it had stiff competition in the infinity pool, where you swim from the indoor pool through a little glass door, to an outside area, where steam rises from the water as you move towards the invisible edge. And even though these man-made delights are wonderful enough, the day was crowned with a seven kilometre walk, winding around three lakes, and seeing some of Farnham's remarkable trees. The Lords Farnham had a tradition of involvement with the Tree Council and the woodlands of the estate contain more than a hundred varieties of trees, including redwood, cedar, copper beech, Scot pine, lime, yew and some of the oldest oaks in the country. Nine of Ireland's 'Champion Trees' (from the Tree Council of Ireland

inventory) are here. There is also a unique collection of tropical trees, bought by Lord Farnham during his travels, and some of the first rhododendrons ever planted in this country. Adopted by a hotel dog on our walk, we had the blissful (and increasingly rare) sense that we could go on forever without hearing the sound of an engine, and a deeply calm feeling descended.

Leaving the next day, as we passed back through the gates, and countryside became town once more, I realised that while I say I want to live in the countryside, like many people, my life is in the city – and that's why places like Farnham are so wonderful, little interludes to rebalance and restore us mind, body and soul. **C**

The Radisson SAS Farnham Estate Hotel is located three kilometres from Cavan Town. Rooms start from €75 per night, for midweek bed and breakfast, per person sharing. Price includes use of spa facilities, treatments extra. See [www.farnhamestate.com](http://www.farnhamestate.com), tel.: +353 49 437 7700