

Irish  
Georgian  
Society  
UNITED STATES

## Great Country Houses & Gardens of Northern Ireland June 8 to 15, 2025 · Sunday to Sunday

*Tour arrangements by Classical Excursions*



Ballywalter Park – Where we will stay for two-nights

Inspired by the architecture of Inigo Jones, who was the first to establish the Palladian style in 17<sup>th</sup> century England, followed by Lord Burlington, William Kent, Colen Campbell and other early 18<sup>th</sup> century English architects, Ireland at the same time developed its own dramatic Palladian movement starting with the new façade for the country house.

Over the past years a bright new political and economic era has been ushered into Northern Ireland and the glorious country houses of the province are an architecturally classical heritage to be discovered. This exclusive tour will include a two-night stay at the privately owned Ballywalter Park, an Italianate Palazzo built in 1846 and now the family home of Lord Dunleath, along with a three-night stay at the privately owned Crom Castle.

The tour is organized by Lani Summerville of Classical Excursions, who has done nine previous tours to Northern Ireland, along with Mark Donnelly and Robert O’Byrne, who are noted experts on Irish decorative arts and architecture. This program will be hosted by Robert O’Byrne who will lead our daily excursions throughout the tour.

### *Overview of our days:*

**June 8<sup>th</sup>** · Dublin to Belfast with a stop at **Bellamont Forest** en route. Check in to the **Culloden Estate & Spa Hotel**, Belfast for a one-night stay.

**June 9<sup>th</sup> to June 11<sup>th</sup>** · Two-night stay at the privately owned **Ballywalter Park**, with visits to **Seaforde, Castle Ward, Mount Stewart, Hillsborough Castle** and **Clandeboyne Estate**

**June 11<sup>th</sup> to June 14<sup>th</sup>** · Three-night stay at **Crom Castle**, with visits to **Killyreagh, Address House, Castle Coole, Barons Court** and **Florence Court**.

**June 14<sup>th</sup>** · Drive south into the Republic of Ireland, we will visit **Ardraccan House, Co. Meath** and **Leixlip Castle**. End the afternoon in Dublin for a one-night stay at the **Merrion Hotel**.

**June 15<sup>th</sup>** · Day for departures or continue with independent touring.

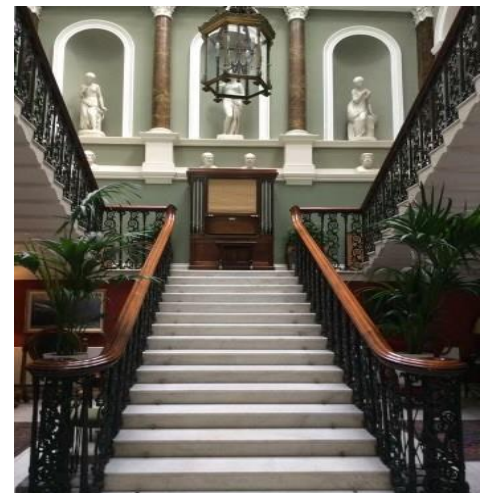
All meals are included in the itinerary.

# TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

## Great Country Houses & Gardens of Northern Ireland

June 8 to 15, 2025 · Sunday to Sunday

A two-night stay at the privately owned **Ballywalter Park**, hosted by Lord Dunleath. Built in 1846 for Andrew Mullholland (whose son became the first Lord Dunleath) and designed by the prominent Belfast architect, Sir Charles Lanyon, the house is the best-preserved example of the Italianate palazzo style in Ireland.



**Mount Stewart**, Newtownards, County Down: Originally built in 1804 and later extended, the first architect was George Dance, the teacher of Sir John Soane. Filled with magnificent antiques, the Regency-styled house contains 22 chairs used at the Congress of Vienna (1815) and given to Mt. Stewart's owner, Lord Castlereagh, British Foreign Secretary and member of the Londonderry family. Mt. Stewart's gardens cover 80 acres and are considered the most complete in Ireland, thriving in the area's subtropical microclimate. Overlooking Strangford Lough is the exquisite small banqueting pavilion inspired by the Temple of the Winds in Athens. Our visit includes drinks with **Lady Rose Lauritzen in her private apartments** at Mount Stewart with a private tour of her personal gardens.



**Seaforde Demesne** (Demesne = land attached to a manor) has been in the Forde family for over 400 years. **Private lunch and tour** of the house with Lady Anthea Forde We will explore the **Seaforde Gardens** and the **Tropical Butterfly House**. Seaforde contains rare specimen trees and plants from around the world and a maze.



A private tour at **Barons Court**, hosted by His Grace, Duke of Abercorn. The house was started in 1779 by the architect George Steuart (who also designed Attingham Hall in Shropshire 1783). Later architects involved in redesigning and completing Barons Court were John Soane and Richard and William Morrison. The result was a powerful seven-bay house with a rotunda located in the heart of the building. The main pediment contains the family coat of arms. The interiors range from the classical coffered rotunda encircled by a ring of Ionic columns to a typical Morrisonian library redecorated by the prominent English decorator, David Hicks.





**Hillsborough Castle** is the official residence of the King in Northern Ireland. The surrounding village has recently been granted royal status. The house was built in 1797 for Wills Hill, 1st Marquess of Downshire; it was sold to the British government in 1925. The property is under the care of Historic Royal Palaces. We will visit both the house and gardens.

**Historic Royal Palaces** was established by the government in 1989 to care for five royal palaces. It became an independent charity and in 2014 took over the management of Hillsborough Castle in Northern Ireland.



Norroy and Ulster King of Arms Robert Noel during an accession proclamation ceremony at Hillsborough Castle near Belfast, publicly proclaiming His Majesty King Charles III as the new monarch on Sunday, 11 September 2022. (Image: Kelvin Boyes/PA)

A three-night stay at **Crom Castle**, hosted by the Earl of Erne. (image below)



Lunch and tour of the privately owned **Killyreagh House** and gardens with the owners Lord and Lady Anthony Hamilton, brother to the Duke of Abercorn. (image right)



**Florence Court**, Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh: An important Irish Georgian mansion, it was named after Lady Florence Cole, the wife of Sir John Cole, the owner who probably had built around 1730 the finally proportioned center block of the house. A later generation in the 1760s added flanking arcaded wings with end pavilions. The vigorous treatment of the exterior is repeated in the interior. Lavish Rococo plaster decoration is featured which was painstakingly restored after a fire in 1955. The Venetian Room, staircase and dining room have the most elaborate plasterwork. The house is filled with 18<sup>th</sup>-century Irish furniture.

**Castle Coole**, Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh: Considered the finest Neo-classical country house in Ireland, it nearly bankrupted its owner, Armar Lowry-Corry, Earl of Belmore, in his attempt in the 1790s to outdo his brother-in-law and neighbor, the Earl of Enniskillen, at Florence Court. The quality of the Portland stone masonry is exceptional, with the design on all four sides of equal perfection. It continues inside, with harmonious unity and balance in the joinery and plasterwork. The final plans were executed by the English architect, James Wyatt. The plasterer was Joseph Rose, who had been hired by Robert Adam to work at Syon House and Harewood House in England. Another glory of Castle Coole is that almost all of the Regency furniture is original and still in place. Our tour is hosted by Lord Belmore who will show us the original Wyatt drawings from his personal collection.



**Clandeboye Estate**, home of the late Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava. The property contains wooded gardens, formal gardens, walled garden, lawns and a lake. The estate was first settled in 1674 and the house dates to 1801-04. (below)



On our way to Dublin, we will have a private visit to **Ardbraccan House**, Co. Meath. The current Palladian house of the 1730's replaced an earlier Tudor House.



**Bellamont Forest** is a Palladian villa located in County Cavan, Ireland. It was designed c.1728 by Sir Edward Lovett Pearce for Thomas Coote. It is considered to be one of the finest examples of Palladian architecture in Ireland and remains in private hands.



Leixlip Castle, the home of **Desmond Guinness**, co-founder of the Irish Georgian Society along with his wife, Mariga Guinness. Leixlip is located in Cellbridge, Co. Kildare.

Please contact the Office of Classical Excursions to register  
[Office@ClassicalExcursions.com](mailto:Office@ClassicalExcursions.com)

## CLASSICAL EXCURSIONS

7 Club Circle, Pittsfield MA 01201

T. 413-446-8728

*Updated as of November 2024 | Itinerary subject to change without notice.*