



## Wedding FAQ's

**We have tried to cover the most commonly asked questions in this FAQ. However feel free to email us if you have any other specific questions and we will be happy to answer them at [info@ballinacurra.com](mailto:info@ballinacurra.com)**

### What Makes Ballinacurra House Different

**Q: What would you say are the main differences between having a wedding at Ballinacurra compared to a hotel?**

**A:** We like to say 'Privacy Makes the Difference'. An exclusive use property has a very different atmosphere to a traditional hotel wedding. Your guests will immediately feel relaxed in a totally private environment and since they know everybody on the property is part of the wedding party – they make more of an effort to socialise with everybody. And there are never any worries with 'the wrong type' of people ruining your wedding. Children are also very safe to roam and play as nobody from the public is ever allowed in. It feels like your own country estate for the weekend!

**Q: What would you say are the main features of your property compared to other similar exclusive use properties or hotels?**

**A:** There are many! But our key points of difference are:

- Location – location – location. We are only minutes from Kinsale, one of Ireland's premier tourist destinations and Heritage town. We offer seclusion – but not isolation – and many similar properties to ours are miles away from the nearest town. We are also only 20 minutes from Cork International Airport and 35 minutes from Cork Railway Station. Kinsale also offers a multitude of activities for your guests to enjoy – from fishing, sailing, horseriding, surfing – or merely wandering its streets with its many coffee shops, restaurants, bar and shops. So you don't have to worry about trying to keep them entertained.
- Our background is event management – we are not hoteliers. So we work with you in creating the wedding that YOU want and not restricted by wedding packages.
- Because of the unique style of the property and proximity to Kinsale, we like to think that your wedding will stand out and be unique for those guests that suffer 'wedding fatigue'. We aim to make your weekend different and fun – not predictable and stuffy.

- We are not a Castle filled with valuable antiques and stuffy staff – but a beautiful Georgian house built in 1770 and then fully renovated in the early 2000s – with a sophisticated and romantic modern day twist.
- When you read our testimonials one of the key elements that stands out are our staff. As we are not a ‘wedding factory’ where our staff treat every wedding the same - they are personable, professional and fun.
- Our reputation for our food is highlighted in the testimonials. We are flexible and try our best to meet your individual requirements. Our chef previously worked at Chapter One (the Michelin star restaurant in Dublin) as well as other country house hotels.
- And in addition to the privacy, 5-star food and great staff – there’s a little bit of the X factor thrown in. Just ask any of our past clients.

## **Pricing and Costs**

**Q : Are you in NAMA and if so what are the implications in terms of quality and service, as we have heard negatives about such venues?**

**A :** Happy to say we are a successful family-owned operation and we are not in NAMA. However there is a major challenge in terms of pricing as NAMA Hotels are run by accountants and banks and therefore are focused entirely on the bottom-line. We are entirely focused on maintaining quality and standards in order to stand out the cluttered Wedding venue market.

**Q : NAMA Hotels are much more flexible on price ?**

**A:** It is your most important day and compromise shouldn't be an option for what will be a lifetime memory. Our view is you get what you pay for and we have already dropped our prices by 30% from the peak. We get most of our business by word of mouth and give 5-star quality at very competitive prices. We offer 'good value' – it is not about being cheap – it's about getting value for the money you are spending – however much that is.

**Q : Is there any room for manoeuvre on the price ?**

**A:** There have been sharp increases in fuel, utilities, staff costs, vat, F&B prices over the last couple of years and we have continued to absorb these without increasing prices or reducing quality. In fact we have already significantly reduced our prices. We can demonstrate ways to make significant savings by focusing on the key elements of a great wedding: venue, location, great F&B, great entertainment and a fun crowd. We also offer special rates depending on the season if you are not fixed on a peak date.

**Q : Do you charge a venue hire like a lot of other Exclusive Use venues do ?**

**A :** No we don't – we charge a fixed price for the property which includes the 40 acre estate venue hire as well as 22 ensuite bedrooms and bed & breakfast for up to 44 people. This price starts at €4,400 up to €6,600 per night (which is equivalent to €100 – €150 per person per night depending on the date. So you decide how much (if any) you would like to pay for all the extras you get and the exclusive use, and how much your guests pay. You

can't compare our per person rate with the price of a hotel room – what you are getting here is an entire private estate versus what you get in a hotel which is a bedroom and access to their public function areas.

Also some venues are cutting out Breakfasts and VAT to make the room price seem cheaper and other subtle elements that you will not notice until it is too late. We believe in being very transparent in everything that we do and if you would like to get some sample budgets, just let us know.

**Q: Is it possible to not take all the rooms?**

**A:** As you know we are offering exclusive use. We are selling you the use of the property for a fixed price for up to 44 people B&B. So it is in your interest to encourage people to stay here first. We find that this year we are having a massive uptake with very few drop offs in numbers. What we understand is that people are not socialising as much and when they get invited to something special, they are all saying yes! The other explanation we have heard from our clients is that when they mentioned they were having their wedding at Ballinacurra, many said that they had always wanted to come here and because we are not open to the public, they have been waiting to be invited by somebody! So I don't think you will have any issue with the numbers for the rooms. However if your numbers attending the wedding is less than 44 people – we can discuss this.

**Q: Do we have to book for 2 nights, or is one night an option?**

**A:** Yes one night is an option from Sunday – Thursday or where we have a 1-day weekend date available.

**Q: What is the situation with the Booking Confirmation Payment?**

**A:** This payment secures the date and starts the planning process. The deposit is non-refundable. We charge €1500 x for a one day wedding, €3000 for a two day wedding and €5000 for three days or more.

**Q: What happens if I need to cancel?**

**A:** If you need to cancel once this Booking Confirmation Payment has been paid, unfortunately we cannot return this payment. This money is forfeited as we have turned business away for the dates that you have secured. However, if you want to postpone the wedding due to unforeseen circumstances, then let us know and hopefully we can find a mutually suitable alternative date. In this case, we will transfer the payment to the new date. You will need to give us six months notice in writing if this is the case as we will need time to re-sell the initial date.

**Q: Can we just take less rooms on the second night in order to reduce costs ?**

**A:** Unlike a hotel we never rent out unused rooms to other clients – we only ever have one group on the property. If we were to do this, we would have a percentage of rooms going empty which is not financially viable and yet still maintaining quality standards and giving you total privacy. If you find that some people cannot stay on the second night, then why not offer that night

to other guests. We will turn the room around ready for the second couple to check-in.

**Q : We are concerned that our guests won't be able to afford to stay?**

**A :** You have several options to counter this:

- explain to your friends what they are getting – private estate – close to Ireland's premier tourist town – luxury accommodation at reasonable rates
- no transport costs going backwards and forwards to a hotel downtown
- late night bar for residents only
- free car parking
- explain to them that they should treat this as a 'weekend' away. Tell them all the things that you are paying for and that in return you are asking them to come and stay at Ballinacurra.
- We give you many inclusions to make your wedding special and unique – which are all included in the Exclusive Use Property price. So many of our couples subsidise the room rate they charge their guests. For example, many other venues charge from €500 to €2000 exclusivity fee. So let's say the room charge is €125 per person per night and you decide that you would like to only charge your guests €90 per person. That means we collect the amount owed by the guest on checkout, and you pay the difference. You are getting so much included anyway – why not put a value to it?
- If you think you have to subsidise the room rate for only some guests, why not put them in the Coachhouse or Cottage and then charge them less money (so you subsidise just those rooms) and those in the Main House can pay the full rate.
- Tell your family and friends that in lieu of a wedding present you would like them to stay at the house to help celebrate your special day!!

### **Food & Beverages**

**Q: We have heard horror stories of people booking hotels and having to give guarantees on the numbers attending when they book, and then have a lot of people dropping out and still having to pay the food costs for non-attendees. How do you deal with guaranteed numbers?**

**A:** Hotels operate differently to us. Basically, in order to be allowed to book a hotel function room that seats maybe 300 people, you have to guarantee maybe 180 people and if you don't reach that number then you still have to pay the guaranteed amount. Who knows how many people will come to their wedding when they are planning so far in advance? Also, some venues are not even interested in you if you have less than 150 people as they don't think it is financially viable. We are different. Basically, when you book our property, all we ask is that you guarantee to pay the Exclusive Use Property Price and you give us your best guess on the number of people that will attend. Obviously your guests then pay the majority of the Property on checkout. We then work with you based on these numbers for budgeting etc. **Two weeks before your wedding, you give us your guaranteed number.**

This is then the number that you guarantee to pay for even if you have last minute drop outs. We can't be fairer than that!

**Q : Do you offer Corkage ?**

**A:** Not normally as we have an excellent wine list of special selected wines at excellent prices. Our House Selection wines start at €22 per bottle. It is a lot of work to stocktake, empty out all our wine, stock yours, serve, re-stocktake and pack up your left over wine etc. We also find that on some occasion when we have allowed it, that the couple have had to over-estimate the amount needed to make sure they didn't run out, and then at the end they are left with a large quantity of wine to take home. It all turned into a false economy.

**Q : I am worried my budget will be blown away by the wine consumption over dinner?**

**A:** This is not something you should worry about at Ballinacurra. The average consumption during a regular 2 hour meal will be ½ to 2/3 bottle per person. So if you have 100 guests, you should budget for between 50 – 70 bottles of wine. If you have many non-drinkers, then maybe err on the side of 50 bottles – and if you have many 'heavier' wine drinkers, then maybe allow for 70 bottles. We give you our best estimates and you can either set a bottle limit or a spend limit or we just keep you informed during the dinner how it's going. Our view is that people are going to drink what they want and it makes no difference to us if it is on your bill or theirs. We basically work with you to manage your budget.

**Q : What do I do about a Toast Drink?**

**A:** Some people do – some people don't. You have choices. You can either just top up the wine glasses just before the speeches. Or give everybody one glass of Prosecco. Or offer everybody a 'drink of your choice' as the toast drink. This also usually signifies the last 'free drink' of the evening before switching to a cash bar.

**Q : What do we do about feeding the children?**

**A:** We advise everybody to firstly make a decision as to whether the children are sitting with the adults at dinner or whether they are going to be fed separately and then maybe have some babysitters keep them company so the parents can relax and enjoy their own dinner. Either way – we don't mind. Just be aware that 2 and 3 year olds don't tend to enjoy sitting quietly for 2-3 hours whilst adults eat and talk! We can also prepare special children's meal served whenever you wish and these are at a much reduced rate of €15 per child.

**Q : Do you offer Food tastings ?**

**A:** Given our exclusive use style of operation rather than a hotel – we do not offer Food tastings. We would have to close the whole property down for a day in order to do this. Our food is specially prepared by award winning chefs and we can send testimonials from our many satisfied clients – which also includes rock stars and royalty that have enjoyed our a la carte standards. Our Head Chef has run chef cookery schools, worked at Chapter One (the Michelin star restaurant in Dublin) and numerous country house hotels.

**Q: Are there vegetarian options?**

**A :** Yes we can accommodate most vegetarian, allergy and other dietary requirements with advance notice.

**Q: We hope to have a special wedding cake – is the charge to serve and set up?**

**A :** I am presuming you are providing the wedding cake and setting it up yourself. We will provide you with a dressed table and cake knife. We will serve this at no charge and also tea and coffee is always running from the end of the meal till close in the Red Room. We do not provide cake stands as everybody has different size / styles of cakes. You will find a large range of stands available to hire from the various cake shops/suppliers.

**Q: Why do you charge a 12.5% service charge?**

**A :** Most venues (hotels as well as other exclusive use) charge some form of service charge. The rates can vary. This is a charge to cover our staff time as we provide a lot of personalised service. Additional gratuities are discretionary. Just read our testimonials to appreciate the level of service that we offer!

**Q: What time does the bar close?**

**A :** We close the bar at 2:00 am. All non-residents must then depart the property and then we can then re-open the bar until 4:00 am. It is in your interest to organise a taxi or minibus shuttle to help get your non-residents home because the sooner they are gone, the sooner the bar re-opens!

**Planning and Organisation**

**Q : What wedding planning services do you provide?**

**A:** We offer the full range – see our wedding brochure. We charge a nominal price to cover our time. Also given the amount of weddings we do and our past event experience – we do know best how a wedding works here.

## **Civil Ceremonies and Civil Partnerships**

### **Q : Can we have a civil ceremony at Ballinacurra House?**

**A :** We are approved by the HSE to hold civil ceremonies. We held Kinsale's 1<sup>st</sup> ever Civil Ceremony and we host about 20 + in-house weddings here every year of that style. You have two options: go through the HSE and book a Civil Ceremony with them direct OR we have a number of excellent government-approved solemnisers that are great to work with and provide a personalised religious ceremony to suit your individual religious beliefs and style.

### **Q : We have some photos on your website showing Ceremonies being held outside. But the HSE says they only conduct these civil ceremonies inside. How can that be?**

**A :** We work with a number of government-approved solemnisers who are not direct employees of the HSE. It is up to you to discuss with them where you would like your ceremony to take place – inside or out – weather dependent of course! If however you do book with the HSE, they can only perform the civil ceremony inside.

### **Q: Can we have a Civil Partnership ceremony?**

**A :** Yes – we are very gay friendly and are approved by the HSE for Civil Ceremonies and Civil Partnerships.

## **Bedrooms**

### **Q : Are the different types of bedrooms available ?**

**A :** The special aspects of what we are offering as well as privacy and 5-star F&B is that all our rooms are themed – which make all of your guest feel individual and special. They are all ensuite and the rooms of all sizes and specs to suit all the individual needs of a flexible group. We have double, twin, triple and quad rooms available. And if we have to squeeze a few small children in, we have some children's beds available as well.

### **Q : What is the largest room capacity ?**

**A :** The largest room can take 4 adults. Also because it is a private estate – people are more relaxed about sharing compared to a hotel.

### **Q : What size are the beds?**

**A :** They are all different. Most of our 'doubles' are Queen Size or larger. Many of the doubles are zip-and-link which means that they are 6 feet wide or can change into 2 x 3 foot singles. A couple of the smaller rooms have standard double beds – but we can talk you through the configuration.

**Q: Do all the rooms come with baths?**

**A:** The majority of our rooms have stand alone walk-in showers as well as baths. Due to the unique style and shape of many of our rooms and bathrooms, a small number may only have a shower.

**Q. Can we book a non-smoking bedroom?**

**A:** All buildings including bedrooms are non-smoking. We do have ample covered areas outside for those who wish to smoke.

**Q: Do you have hairdryers in the bedrooms?**

**A:** Yes

**Q : Do you have toiletries in the bathrooms?**

**A:** Yes, we supply shower gel, soap, shampoo and conditioner in all bathrooms. If you need anything extra, we may have toiletry supplies through reception.

**Q : Can we get breakfast delivered to our bedroom?**

**A:** Due to the unique nature of many of our bedrooms, paintwork and furniture, we don't allow food to be taken to the rooms.

**Q : How can you cater for disabled guests?**

**A:** The house was built in 1770 and although it was fully renovated, there are certain issues with regards to disabled access. We have however attempted to meet the needs of these guests as best we can. We have a downstairs bedroom with a full wet room and grab rails for the WC and basin. All power points are lowered and the bedroom allows good floor clearance. This room is also interconnecting with another bedroom so if you wish to have a carer or family member close by to help, then it is possible. We have ramps into our Garden Room and a disabled WC in the Bar area. We have portable ramps which can be moved around by either a staff member or family member to help in the other areas. We have had numerous guests use these facilities.

**General House Questions**

**Q : Do you have WIFI ?**

**A:** There is complimentary wifi service through-out the whole property.

**Q : Are high chairs and cots available and what is the charge?**

**A:** We have a number of cots and high chairs available – and they free of charge to use.

**Q : How much parking space is there?**

**A:** There is adequate available for guests list up to 150 people.

**Q : Can we get clothes ironed or dry cleaned?**

**A :** We have a limited number of irons available for use so we usually set them up in one of the communal areas for everybody to use. If you need dry cleaning, we can check with the local dry cleaner in Kinsale, but if you have a tight lead time, it might not be possible.

**Q : What are the standard check-in and check-out times?**

**A :** The standard check-in time is 2:00 pm and check-out is at 11:00 am.

**Q : Is it possible to check-in earlier or check-out later?**

**A :** It is sometimes possible, however, this depends on availability and cannot be guaranteed. Additional charges may apply.

**Q : What credit and debit cards do you accept?**

**A :** We accept all types of credit card but charges apply – 3% Amex and 2 % all others. Cheques, Bank Transfers and cash works better of course.

**Q : How do my guests checkout?**

**A :** We setup a checkout desk on the morning of departure. You will have provided us with the list of guests and the amount we are to collect from them on departure, the total of which will come off the guaranteed Exclusive Use Property Rate that you agreed to pay on booking. You only pay the difference – if any.

**Q :Do you have a pet policy?**

**A :** We can discuss this on a case by case basis as we have our own dogs on the property.

**Kinsale**

**Q : What are the directions to Ballinacurra House ?**

**A :** See our website for a downloadable map. We are only ever private, there is no road signage and people know they are coming here. So make sure your guests bring the map.

**Q : Is it possible to play golf while I am in Kinsale ?**

**A :** Yes there are 5 courses including the world renowned Old Head Golf Course.

**Q : What activities are available in Kinsale ?**

**A :** There are many wonderful activities in Kinsale including world class sailing golf, horse riding etc. Look at [www.kinsale.ie](http://www.kinsale.ie) for a more detailed list.

**We are happy to answer your questions, just email us at [info@ballinacurra.com](mailto:info@ballinacurra.com) or see our website [www.ballinacurra.com](http://www.ballinacurra.com).**