

PROPERTY MARKET

IMAGINE. You've just won the lotto; you're now vastly wealthy; and have instantly dumped all your woes.

No more fretting about diminishing income, dwindling savings, and penny rubbing. Bills and their outgoings can furrow your brow no further. And as for the chaos of world finance, international leaders are seeking your counsel.

With all the time in the world at your disposal, the opportunity to peruse the fantasy end of the property market — equipped with super-charged purchasing power — is finally yours. Whatever dream pad takes your fancy, you'll be able to pick it up. No fussing. No mortgage. And with the minimum of paperwork, please and thanks.

So, with that in mind, what could you lay your eyes (and hands) on out there?

After taking on board all the insightful and veteran advice you could gather in your time in the ordinary man's world, is it all now to be jettisoned?

Or does any of it apply when mulling over the whether or not to boldly acquire the trophy abode?

"These houses always buck the trend. There's always demand," says Ed Carey, the Residential Head at the Society of Chartered Surveyors Ireland (SCI).

"But still, any buyer has to be sure of the property. To be honest though, the primary motivator is in personal preference. The 'what I like' factor. I suppose it's more caveat vendor than anything else."

But if you're not quite packing gold bullion in the boot of your car, what determines decisions? What clinches a deal?

"The fact that a property has become available, at last. Potential buyers may have been waiting years," says Ger Carmody, a Kerry-based member of the SCI.

"A buyer might even pay that bit over the odds because the opportunity may not pass again in their lifetime."

What should you do if you can't find your fairytale castle? Where to then? "There's always what's 'off market'," says, Carey. "It may not be sitting in the shop window, but you can always enquire as to what might be a potential buy."

A canny ploy indeed, and one that just may unearth



Ger Carmody: Buyer may pay over odds to get unique home.



In the final part of our three-day series, **David Young** looks at six homes for the super-wealthy

what you're looking for.

In the meantime, here are six of Munster's finest for you to enjoy. Homes that have taken vision, courage, and years to construct and maintain. And of course, deep reserves of dough to keep the respective shows on the road.

Of course, location, design, and landscape layout are key components in any build. On these pages though, you'll encounter much more; elements such as charm and character. Often hackneyed in the industry, you'll see them reinvigorated and de-cliche'd, which is as refreshing as their remoteness.

You'll walk shingled shore lines, spy the Sheep's Head peninsula, and feel you've stepped onto the silver screen. Then, get transported back in time, more than two centuries, to amble by streams, saddle up your horses, and host soirees. There's also the risk of getting lost in residences with more rooms than you can count.

In these houses, the most modern materials couch the living experience in indefatigable comfort — every sound and surface being catered for, and every ambient value measured. Let's just say you'll be toasty warm, entertained, and able to see the world from most every angle of your home. Without sticking out like a sore thumb either. You and the countryside will be at one. The subtlest stuff you can imagine.

And that's all before you meet the mermaids. Enjoy the ride.



**Mermaid Isle, Illaundrane, Sneem, Co Kerry**

WHERE do you start with a residence that's part of local legend? Not any old folklore, mind you, regarded tales that speak of mermaids being sighted in the private bay. Well, there's 4,000 feet of shoreline to begin with, and half of the 25 or so acres comes in the form of an island. And there's two houses side by side, to boot.

Getting the picture? With hot-tubs and boat launches, and just off the Ring of Kerry, Mermaid Isle is innately enchanting. And it's much more than just an ocean-front retreat. This inlet is no sliver of heaven, it's a thick slice — without dolphins, seals and other regular visitors, to convince of the existence of a higher being.

The main home is a 4,500 square foot, slate-clad construction; built in, a medieval and beam barn style. And of course, every single

item added is authentic to the theme of the ancient fisherman's cottage. The owner — a museum designer — certainly knows a thing or two about his discipline.

You can stop trying to figure out the aesthetic of it all and simply marvel at the spiral staircase carved by a local sculptor from a single stump, or ponder the genius in the assembly of antique windows, slabs of cedar, cauldrons and glass-faced iron stove.

On the practical side, there are four contemporary, fitted bedrooms in marble and limestone, and the main home has enough room spaces that may be used for bedrooms (7 or 8, depending on your juggling), office, study or even hobby areas.

Then there's the air-pumped, bio-active water treatment sewage plant, high-pressure private well,

**The details**

- **Location:** Mermaid Isle, Illaundrane, Sneem, Co Kerry
- **Price:** €3,950,000
- **Size:** 4,844sq ft (c25 acres: island and mainland; 4,000ft of shoreline)
- **Bedrooms:** 6 (and 3 bathrooms)
- **BER rating:** B2
- **Broadband:** Yes



Modernity has been counterbalanced by the inclusion of artifacts.

and electricity and phone/internet services to cater for all your needs. And lest I forget, there are also the translucent conservatory roofs through which you can gaze at the heavens, while the breathtaking light helps heat the heavy slate floor.

**VERDICT: Sitting in a hot tub, watching shooting stars and enjoying a micro-climate is a winner any day.**

**Woodfield House, Broadford, Co Clare**

WOODFIELD House is everything you wish a country manor to be.

Resplendent in its own estate of 35 acres, this 5,000 square foot mansion is simply magnificent — from the property's automated cast iron gated entrance to the stature wooded land the sweeps down to the water's edge of Doon Lake. The sight of fishing boats from spring to autumn is quite a spectacle.

The house itself is surrounded by traditional stone stables, tack rooms, outbuildings, paddocks, and a centre arena. A courtyard completes the framing of this country home.

It's notable that this estate has undergone extensive restoration work over the last dozen years to bring it up to the impeccable standard it's at today. This is illustrated not only by its overall aesthetic and finishes, both inside and out, but also by its BER — Building Energy Rating — of C1; exceptional for a house of its vintage, dating back to the 1700s.

On the ground floor, you are welcomed via a reception hall. From here, you can be ushered into either the drawing or sitting room, or even a period dining room.

All have simple dimensions, yet are beautifully assembled with furniture to correspond to the



Woodfield House: Has had extensive restoration work in recent years.

house's natural character.

The kitchen, cloakroom, study/office, shower/sauna and recreation room, all on the base-ment garden level floor, are as bright as anywhere else in the house, which is quite a feat. Between the first and second floors, you'll encounter a wonderful choice of six bedrooms.

**VERDICT: A place to fish, ride a horse or even lift a paint brush. All at your own pace.**

**The details**

- **Location:** Woodfield House, Broadford, Co Clare
- **Price:** €1,800,000
- **Size:** 5,000sq ft (about 34.5 acres)
- **Bedrooms:** 6 (and 4 bathrooms)
- **BER rating:** C1
- **Broadband:** Yes

**Winterwood, Adare, Co Limerick**

You'd think superstar property status would be almost impossi-

ble to attain if a residence were to be set against the backdrop of Adare Manor. Well, au contraire, Winterwood is an instant stand-out candidate. Installed on almost three acres, and bravely holding 16,500 square feet of spectacularly finished rooms, hallways and entrances, this house wows.

There's no hint of Winterwood's landscaped grounds being made to fit the neighbouring 840 acre estate. The two just blend as nature intended — allowing this property to become part of the amazing parkland and woodland. It even as its own stream.

Step inside and your mind soars like a balloon up through the interior — a bridal double staircase. The light, space and sophistication of the stairs and the bannisters, balconies and climbing windows is nothing if not theatrical.

The kitchen's seamlessness is akin to an oil painting's. The tile floor and marble counter tops are radiant, and matched only by the ornamentation carved into the solid cabinet flourishes and double-stove mantel.

The same calibre of craftsmanship is found in all five reception rooms, their fireplaces, ceilings, and bay windows. It's also imme-



Winterwood: Holds 16,500 square feet of spectacularly finished rooms.

diately evidenced in the eight bedrooms and bathrooms, and specialist features such as the bath with marble steps, sauna, steam room and pool.

All that, and the garden is well stocked, tended and ready to go. And there's a paddock. All you need now is a helicopter.

**VERDICT: A property without hang-ups about going all out for grandeur. Winterwood is red hot.**

**The details**

- **Location:** Winterwood, Adare, Co Limerick
- **Price:** €2,800,000
- **Size:** 16,500sq ft (c2.8 acres)
- **Bedrooms:** 8 (and 8 bathrooms)
- **BER rating:** Pending
- **Broadband:** Yes

**Stoneacre, Kenmare, Co Kerry**

THIS may not be the most outlandishly expensive property on the market but it's right up there when it comes to smarts. Deftly crafted and positioned, the house engages wholly with its immediate surroundings, and absorbs con-

temperatures of the greater locale. Stoneacre is one clever build. All the principal rooms have large folding doors that allow the most natural transition between inside and out. And boy, are the gardens something else. Think Snow White and the Seven Dwarves, and you're getting there. Blushes of flowers, shrubs and trees of a certain size would make Disney proud.

Yet, the house comes in at about 5,000 square feet, and occupies two and half acres, so, there's nothing twee about it. And to add, there's a fusion of the traditional and the contemporary to achieve an unassuming yet deeply impressive finish.

There are solid oak posts and beams, left exposed to allow an organic touch to pervade; complemented by the hand-turned oak kitchen units. The extra thick walls continue the theme, allowing for extra thermal and acoustic values. Underfloor heating, high spec insulation, Scandinavian windows, all join in the clever chorus.



Stoneacre: Boasts a fusion of the traditional and contemporary.



Did I mention the slate roofing? It's probably more notable for the low-slung appearance it gives the residence than its mother earth

**The details**

- **Location:** Stoneacre, Kenmare, Co Kerry
- **Price:** €1,800,000
- **Size:** 4,951ft (c2.5 acres)
- **Bedrooms:** 6 (and 6 bathrooms)
- **BER rating:** B1
- **Broadband:** Yes

dimension. I could dazzle you with the details of all the bedrooms; suffice to say, number 6 doubles as a study, effortlessly. And

together with bedroom 5, the two can conspire with an adjoining kitchenette to accommodate guests separately to the rest of the house. Choices, eh.

Only two miles from Kenmare town, this magical place could hold you captive forever. The entrance hall to the house, with its double ceiling height, would make any visit worthwhile, in its own right. The rest of the home is a masterclass in the use of space.

**VERDICT: If you robbed a bank to meet the asking price, I'd totally understand. I've stared and stared at this home, and still can't tire of it.**



West Park House: This 250-year-old residence sports modern technology.

**West Park House, Midleton, Co Cork**

NO matter how you say it, being 250 years old is undeniably ancient. Yet, West Park House now stands as a testament to state-of-the-art refurbishment graft and guile. Having just undergone extensive restoration with the finest of materials, this East Cork mansion is more magnificent now than when it first was constructed.

The four floors of this immense property have been painstakingly re-designed to parachute it into the 21st century; of course, all the while remaining ever mindful of its past. The Irish Heritage Council were on hand to provide the requisite advice and guidance during this arduous process.

So, if you look closely through its myriad panelled and arched windows, you'll find a treasure trove of modern technology. Throughout the building, there is a Cat5 sound and entertainment system in place, with speakers everywhere. And the main rooms are all equipped for Internet access and telephone communication.

Then there's the practical side: underfloor heating keeps the basement, ground floor and first floor ambient. The kitchen, well, let's just say — you could run a hotel from it. It still retains its palatial touch though — perhaps due to the coving and the hand-crafted cabinets, and the French doors, leading out onto the patio.

Each of the seven bedrooms is a suite, and fit for a princess. When you have four floors and just over 11,500 square feet, why skimp? As you amble around the residence, what's beneath your feet switches between walnut wood and Turkish tile.

Surrounded by woodland, gardens and a stone courtyard, the house, in its elevated position could almost lick its own face. A mile from Midleton town, and not even half an hour from Cork airport, West Park House has vast appeal.

**The details**

- **Location:** West Park House, Midleton, Co Cork
- **Price:** €1,490,000
- **Size:** 11,496sq ft (c7 acres)
- **Bedrooms:** 7 (and 6 bathrooms)
- **BER rating:** Exempt
- **Broadband:** Yes



There's further accommodation available here too, in four and two bedroomed houses. You could rent them out, and offset the running costs. And keep your privacy. Phenomenal. A dream property that could almost lick its own face.

A mile from Midleton town, and not even half an hour from Cork airport, West Park House has vast appeal.

**VERDICT: A house in a world of its own, yet still accesses the one the rest of us inhabit.**



Otterbank: Comes with a boat shed, cabana and decking and stunning views.

**Otterbank, Waterfall, Castletownbere, Cork**

AT Otterbank, nothing obstructs the way of the out-of-this-world view. Nor even a downpour could dull your day here. Set on about seven acres, with untrammelled coastal access to Bantry Bay, venturing here is like stepping onto a movie set.

At about 150ft above sea level, this property allows you eye Bere Island and the Sheep's Head peninsula, and all the stunning mountain scenery you can absorb. The south-facing location is totally private, and tended to immaculate condition. Sloping grounds coax you down to the shingled shoreline where you'll find a ready decking area and cabana.

This hefty chunk of coastline stretches almost a thousand feet. Sailors will appreciate the deep water in front of Otterbank and bless the boat shed.

Then there's the house. Configured over two floors, it is sizeable, encompassing just over 4,000 sq ft. The marble flooring of the entrance leads to the living area, open plan and available to the terraced areas via French doors. There's also a Roman-style column.

As you'd expect, the kitchen is handcrafted. The units are fashioned from Irish maple, while the counters are granite. And the breakfast area spans into the sun-

**The details**

- **Location:** Otterbank, Waterfall, Castletownbere, Co Cork
- **Price:** €1,700,000
- **Size:** 4,090sq ft (c7 acres)
- **Bedrooms:** 4 (and 3 bathrooms)
- **BER rating:** B3
- **Broadband:** Yes

room, for fear you lose sight of the view for a mere moment. The whole downstairs has been treated to an under floor heating system.

Upstairs let's its hair down a little, with a games room and a large library — all with dazzling natural light. Of course, there are a couple more bedrooms. But it's the wiring of the entire house with Bang & Olufsen sound systems, and remote controls in every chamber of the place that really excites.

After that, the fact that the wood floors happen to be Juncker beech and American broad plank is almost inconsequential. Funny that.

**VERDICT: Walk into your own movie. And turn up the volume while you're at it. This is the life.**