Malahide Castle Reopens. One of Ireland’s most marvelous of castles, reopens after a redevelopment now with an interactive exhibition in the new visitor center to tell the fascinating history of the Talbot family, including those reported to still haunt the place. While most castles change hands over time, fall into disuse and decay, their owners die out or end up on the wrong side of history, losing their heads, the Talbots of Ireland managed to keep Malahide Castle in the family for 800 years, from 1185 up until 1975, finally done in by the modern curse of castle life, taxes. After the last Lord Talbot died in 1973, the castle and its extensive estate grounds north of Dublin were sold to the state and are now a publicly managed museum and park called the Malahide Demesne.

The Malahide Castle legacy began in 1185, when the lands and harbor of Malahide were granted to a Talbot by England’s King Henry II, wrested from the last Viking King of Dublin. The oldest sections of the castle, the ruins of a chapel, date back to the 12th century. The castle as it now stands is mostly the result of major additions and reconstruction in the 1700s with the distinctive towers finally added in 1765. The Talbots lost control for 10 years in the 1600s after the subjugation of Ireland by the Parliamentarian forces of Oliver Cromwell. Malahide Castle was lucky to survive the destruction of other fortresses visited by Cromwell, with the lands granted to Miles Corbet, but after Cromwell lost his own head, Corbet met the fate of traitors and the castle returned to the Talbots.

Multi-lingual guided tours led visitors through four opulently decorated castle rooms that are open to the public, leading from room to room through nearly hidden doorways. Much of the original furniture of Malahide was sold off with the castle, but some tracked down and recovered so the house retains much of the feeling of the Talbots. Many of the portraits on display at the castle are on loan from the National Gallery. The signature chamber of the castle tour is the Oak Room, the first stop of dark nearly black oak paneling and a once secret doorway. The Great Hall is noted for its famous painting depicting the Battle of Boyne, central to Irish history, especially in the north (see St Columbs Cathedral), along with a portrait of Richard Talbot, the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, known as "Fighting Dick Talbot", leader of the Catholics loyal to King James II, who lost the battle to the protestant forces of William of Orange. Legend has it that 14 members of the Talbot clan sat for breakfast in the Great Hall of Malahide Castle the morning of July 1, 1690, and all were dead by the time the battle was over that evening.

Malahide Ghosts

Malahide Castle is reputed to be haunted by five ghosts. Miles Corbet, the Cromwellian roundhead who was hanged, drawn and quartered, first appears in full armor then falls into four sections - Sir Walter Hussey, the groaning Lord Galtrim sacrificed himself defending the honor of his young bride who then immediately married the rival who had killed him with a spear - Lady Maud Pinkett, the very same bride, a shrew in later life who runs through the castle shouting at her unfortunate third husband - a jester named Puck who was murdered, possibly for bad comedy, but swore to haunt the castle until a master married a bride of the people. Puck doesn’t seem to hang around anymore, apparently gone when the furniture was sold, or perhaps released after one of the many weddings held at Malahide was good enough to satisfy his curse, but if you see his image in the photographs at Malahide, the joke may be on you. And every castle has its White Lady. Malahide’s is an anonymous apparition from a portrait which once hung in the Great Hall. Tours don’t promise a ghostly encounter, but be careful you don’t get separated from your group.

Talbot Botanic Gardens

The Botanic Gardens, created by Lord Milo Talbot between 1948 until his death in 1973 feature a walled garden of Victorian style and several greenhouses with almost 5,000 species of plants focusing on flora from the Southern Hemisphere situated behind the castle, comprising several acres of shrubbery from Australia and Chile. The 20-acre ornamental gardens, including the Walled Garden, should delight gardening enthusiasts who can explore the Victorian Greenhouse, the Old Rose Garden, the Peach House, the Alpine Yard and the Pond.

Visiting Malahide Castle

The castle is open daily from 9.30am to 5.30pm, with last admissions at 4.30pm. Castle tours cost for adults is €12, students €8, children €6 and seniors €7.50 for kids. A family ticket is available for €26 or €30. The courtyard now offers a new café and an Avoca Store, replacing the Fry Model Railway and the Tara’s Palace Dollhouse Museum which are no longer there. The dollhouse museum is now at Powerscourt House in Wicklow and the models trains still awaiting a new home. Malahide Castle is about a 20 minute drive from Dublin by car following Malahide Road. By public transport, city bus line 42 departs from Talbot Street in the center of Dublin and the DART train or suburban rail line stops at Malahide Village Station with a 15 minute walk through the park to get to the castle. Malahide Castle is included on the Dublin Card available from Dublin Tourism. © Bargain Travel Europ