

Meet Your Host



James and Nicola Manningham-Buller

Meet James and Nicola Manningham-Buller, B&B Hosts at [Ballymote House](#) in Downpatrick, Co. Down. James and Nicola have brought the country house tradition to the forefront of hospitality and have welcomed guests to their impressive Georgian House for more than ten years. Nicola is a keen cook and both are passionate about horses and equestrian training. Their home is in a prime location for anyone visiting the major attractions in County Down with the Game of Thrones locations only a stone's throw away. Find out everything there is to know about James, Nicola and Ballymote House in this week's Meet Your Host interview.



What are the hidden gems close to your home?

- Inch Abbey
- Strangford Lough
- Ballynoe Stone Circle

What is your favourite guest story?

We had the pleasure of having a world renowned violinist stay with us for one night. He had planned to travel for a week and a half but after staying one night at Ballymote House, he decided to cancel his travel plans and stay for the whole duration with us. Our home is situated in spacious parkland, set amongst unspoilt farm land, so you're guaranteed pure peace and tranquillity which he very much enjoyed. We loved having him stay with us as we had the pleasure of enjoying our own private performances.

What is your signature dish?

Besides our delicious full Irish breakfast, my signature dish would have to be our version of "Eggs Benedict"! It is smoked haddock, with poached eggs, and served on toasted soda bread all smothered with hollandaise sauce. The smoked haddock is undyed and locally smoked, the eggs from our own hens and the soda bread is made by a local lady! It's a Ballymote House special and always goes down a treat.

Is there anything about your home that is quirky?

I would have to say the whole place! Each day comes as a surprise as I never know what it will bring, with every day being different. Ballymote is a Georgian house built in the 18th Century and you will find lots of interesting family things throughout our home!

Have you ever had any famous guests?

Yes we have had many famous guests stay with us, as mentioned before we have had a world renowned violinist stay with us. But discretion is our middle name at Ballymote House so we shall not name names!

What is your favourite thing about the area you live in?

The locality is totally unspoilt. We live in a farming community where everybody knows everybody and our neighbours are very friendly and helpful. On the odd occasion, guests have become lost on their way to Ballymote House but neighbours are quick to spot a lost traveller and have kindly dropped them to our doorstep.

When you are not looking after guests what is your favourite thing to do?

Horses are a way of life at Ballymote House. I coach dressage and three day eventing and we have welcomed many horse riders and their horses to our home for coaching and continue to do so. It's a great passion of ours.

What are your top three attractions in this country?

- I think the Ulster Museum is completely underrated. Its a fascinating museum and is a must for anyone visiting Northern Ireland.
- The landscape at Strangford Lough is absolutely stunning.
- A big attraction to Northern Ireland is the local cuisine. I'm privileged to know some excellent local artisan producers in County Down.