

mattresses that'll turn you against your own bed as soon as you get home.

The hotel's Spa Veda is another big draw, offering a pool, aromatherapy steam room, rock sauna, ice fountain and invigorating showers.

Spa treatments are also available to non-guests — with regular special offers on facials, massages and eye treatments.

After an evening stint in the sauna you might be tempted to sink into the bed with Netflix for company, but you'd be missing out on Westport's nightlife. With 50 pubs and restaurants for a population of 5,500, it's a pretty good ratio.

Ask anyone from Westport, or Mayo, for that matter, to suggest a pub and nine out of 10 will suggest Matt Molloy's on Bridge Street ([mattmolloy.ie](http://mattmolloy.ie)) — owned by the legendary Chieftains flute player.

It's known as one of the best trad bars in the country — with impromptu sessions, gigs, album launches and fundraisers attracting Ireland's best folk and trad musicians.

There's a real 'get involved' feel though — within a few minutes of arriving we spot a few women taking off their high heels to dance, and someone grabs a brush to attempt the brush dance, to roars and glasses raised all round.

We have an early start after Molloy's, but at least there isn't too much to organise.

Clew Bay Bike Hire ([clewbaybikere.com](http://clewbaybikere.com)) operates a minibus shuttle service from your hotel, for a cycle along Mayo's famous Great Western Greenway — with 42km of off-road cycling and walking trails that pass through the quaint villages of Newport

and Mulranny.

You can also arrange a pick-up spot, so there's no pressure to go the whole hog.

After a cycle past streams, stone bridges and mountain views, it's best to give Westport House and Gardens ([westporthouse.ie](http://westporthouse.ie)) a full afternoon.

The Sky Challenge high ropes course is a big draw for hens and stags, couples and school kids. It's a three-level rope and obstacle course to test out your inner Tarzan or Jane, with sections ranging from 'the Postman's Walk' and 'Islands in the Sky' to the self-explanatory 'Heebie Jeebie'.

Watch out for the kids as well — they'll laugh and point if you let out any kind of nervous yelp.

Westport House itself is the town's biggest tourist attraction, with 60 per cent of visitors saying it's their main reason to

visit.

The Pirate Adventure Park on the grounds is there for a reason as well. Westport House dates back to 1500, when legendary Pirate Queen Grace O'Malley (Grainne Mhaol) reigned in one of her castles. The dungeons are open to the public to explore, along with a film on her life as a history lesson.

Aside from the tales of Grace, the house has centuries of history to pour over, as one of Ireland's most famous stately homes, owned by the Browne family — direct descendents of the Pirate Queen.

With 30 rooms on show, there's a world of original artwork, artefacts and beautifully preserved snapshots into everyday life in a stately home in centuries past.

Westport House also caters for corporate meetings, weddings and Downton Abbey-style hen parties with afternoon tea (€30pp) evening

buffet (€35pp) and even photoshoot packages (€10pp).

After soaking up Grace O'Malley's story you may get a hankering to hit the high seas, but take it in baby-steps.

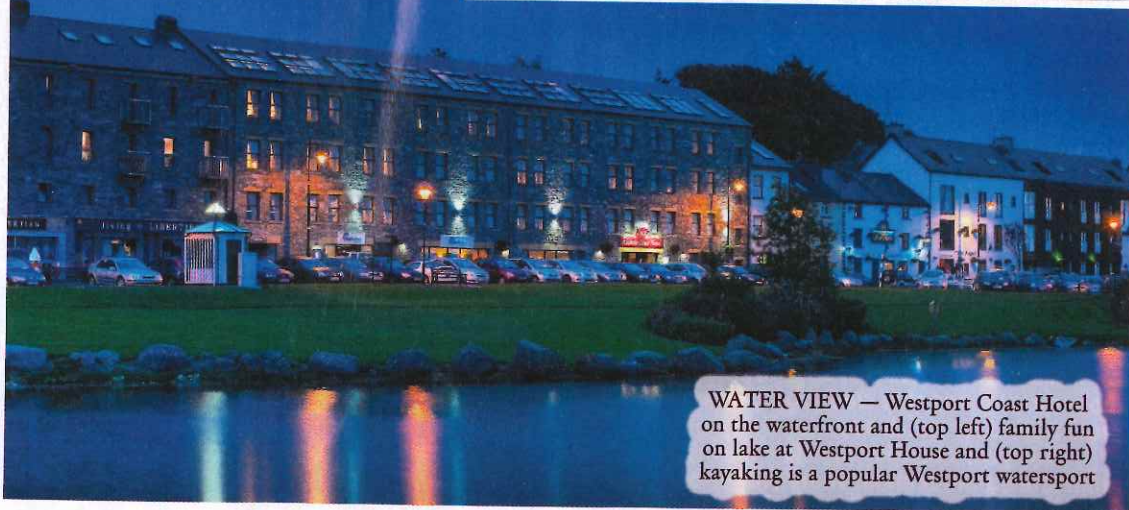
Clew Bay Bike Hire also runs daily sea kayaking trips from the bay, and the early evening excursion is the real highlight of the weekend.

Obviously this is the west of Ireland so you're never far from a rain check, but we lucked out with one of the calmest evenings in months — with barely a ripple in the sea, and mirror images of the setting sun and Croagh Patrick on the bay enough to take away the sting of having to drive back to Dublin.

But for an extra help in that department there's always a few hours left in the sauna and steam room at Wesport Coast.

Check out [www.destinationwestport.com](http://www.destinationwestport.com) for lots of ideas on where to stay and what to do in the area

Don't miss out on Westport's famed nightlife



**WATER VIEW** — Westport Coast Hotel on the waterfront and (top left) family fun on lake at Westport House and (top right) kayaking is a popular Westport watersport