



# Jimmy and Noreen



🍍 Jimmy and Noreen

📍 County Kerry, Ireland

🏠 The Forest of the Roses

👤 Innkeepers

## In Ireland, a place of belonging prettied in pink

BY ELISE SEYFRIED

**The Forest of the Roses** (“Coill an Rois” in Gaelic) Bed and Breakfast is about ten miles from Dingle Town, near the foot of Mount Brandon in County Kerry, Ireland. The B&B, built by proprietor Jimmy Bruic, opened for business in 1997. It is painted bright pink; one guest likened the shade to Pepto Bismol, and Jimmy’s wife Noreen jokes that it may be visible from the moon. In any event, it is impossible to miss, a beacon for hikers and other visitors to the area, which, Jimmy says, is the point of the pink.



My two daughters and I were traveling through Ireland in June, 2017, and booked our stay based on glowing [reviews](#). Upon our arrival, Jimmy greeted us at the door with a smile, taking our bags, asking about our trip and showing us to our rooms. Once settled, we met his sweet dog, Spot, and chatted with Jimmy in the sitting room over tea and delicious homemade cookies. Jimmy was delighted to learn that my girls lived in Brooklyn, NY, and wanted to hear about their jobs and apartments. He shared that he’d lived in NYC for years, working as a pastry chef at restaurants,

including at South Street Seaport. While he was happy to be back home in Ireland, he said he also loved and missed New York:

“Every time I see a yellow taxi in a movie, it brings a tear to my eye.”

Learning that my Rose and Julie were both runners, Jimmy suggested a trail from the B&B. Learning that I was NOT a runner, he pointed me to a walking path nearby.

I had reserved tickets for a traditional Irish music concert at the Dingle Music Shop, and Jimmy recommended a seafood restaurant for dinner before the concert, a spot called Sheehy’s Anchor Down: “Best freshly caught fish in town!” With that, he left us with wishes for a good evening. “You’ll meet Noreen in the morning,” he promised. He explained that his wife was a teacher in a Catholic school in Cork, where she had family, and that she drove hours each weekend to County Kerry to help him at Coill an Rois.

The next day, we awakened to the gentle mooing of cows out in the field, and the aroma of cooking breakfast. As predicted, Noreen was in the dining room. She is as chatty and kind as her husband, and made us feel as if the fabulous meal being offered was just for us. The fresh scones and mini-muffins were hot and delectable; we loved the Irish bacon as well. A highlight of the meal was Jimmy’s porridge, made with Bailey’s Irish Cream. It was a full house that morning, but the couple made frequent appearances at the tables to visit, so while service was prompt, it never felt rushed.

As we headed out on our day trip, Jimmy provided us with a map. It was a cool, sunny day, and the Sleah Head Drive, a scenic loop circling the Dingle Peninsula by the sea, was perfect entertainment. When we returned to Coill an Rois, other guests were arriving, but Jimmy and Noreen still took the time to ask us all about our adventure, as if we were the only people there.

Later that day, I learned more about this lovely couple. When they met in 2008, they were in their forties, but neither had been married. Noreen came on holiday to stay at Forest of the Roses. After becoming acquainted, she and Jimmy struck up a friendship that blossomed into love. They married in 2012, and Noreen became Jimmy’s innkeeping partner, as well as spouse.

Even though Noreen lives and works most of the week in Cork, she spends the weekends in the big pink house, making visitors feel like old friends.

That evening, after another great meal and more music in Dingle Town, we drove through a light misting rain back to the B&B. As we pulled into the driveway, the

most vivid rainbow I've ever seen arched across the sky just beyond the house, the perfect Irish touch for our last evening with the Bruics.

The next morning, after pastries, porridge, and conversation, we said our goodbyes. Now, four years later, I think of them often. Jimmy reports that they were closed during the pandemic, just reopening in June. Guests are arriving once again in Dingle, and Coill an Rois, to be greeted by the Bruics' warm hospitality.

I asked Jimmy why he and Noreen do what they do. He quoted David Whyte as his response: "This is the bright home in which I live. This is where I ask my friends to come. This is where I want to love all the things it has taken me so long to learn to love...there is no house like the house of belonging."

I dream of someday returning to that magical place in the west of Ireland, where a special couple provides a beautiful house of belonging for the lucky travelers staying at The Forest of the Roses.

**About the journalist:**

Elise Seyfried is the author of four books of humorous essays, and freelance essays for many publications including The Philadelphia Inquirer, The Independent, Living Lutheran, Shore Monthly, Delaware Beach Life, Chicken Soup for the Soul, Purple Clover, Modern Loss, and The Belladonna Comedy. Her website:

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