



The Northern Standard

Circulating in Counties Monaghan, Cavan, Armagh, Louth and Fermanagh



TRAVEL 2016

BY GEORGE KEEGAN



TRAVEL MEDIA AWARDS 2016

There was a packed attendance at a gala dinner in the 5* Westbury Hotel, Dublin recently to announce this year's Travel Media awards. They are unique in that they are the only awards calling on the members of the media to vote for their favourite travel companies. The annual event, now in its 6th year, is organised by TravelMedia.ie and the main sponsor is Blue Insurance. Among the award category sponsors were Amadeus, Shannon Airport, Dublin Airport, the Great lakes USA (who had 15 delegates present), London City Airport and Nassau Paradise Island. This year there were also three new media categories- Best use of Video by an Irish Travel Blogger, Best New Irish Travel Blog and an award for Travel photo of the Year. The voting was independently audited and managed by the Dept. of Tourism at Dublin Institute of Technology. Space does not allow me to give the full list of 26 winners however the following 'Best' list hopefully will be of interest to readers of this column:

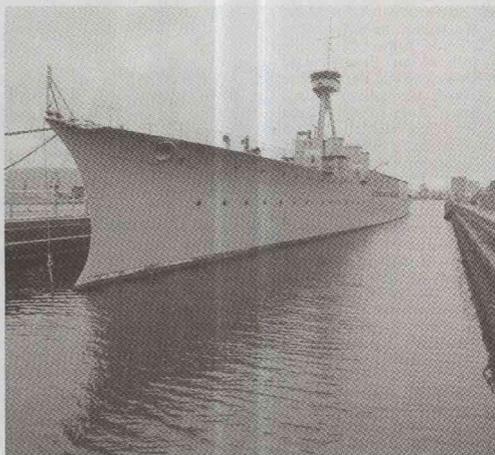
Short Haul Airline Europe - Aer Lingus
Long Haul Airline Flying west - Aer Lingus
Long Haul Flying east - Emirates
Airport Hotel - Cork International Hotel
International Hotel Group - Red Carnation Hotels
Cruise Company - MSC Cruises
Ferry Company- Irish Ferries
Canal or River Cruise Company- Uniworld Boutique River Cruises
City or Short Break Destination- Lisbon
Summer Destination 2016 - Spain
Ski Operator- Crystal Ski Holidays
Ski Resort- Pas de la Casa, Andorra

A special Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to Mr. Gerry Benson publisher and editor of Travelbiz which is considered to be the most read and viewed online publication for the travel industry. New ITAA President

As mentioned briefly in the last column Cormac Meehan from Bundoran is the newly elected President of the Irish Travel Agent's Association. Cormac was a guest speaker at the Travel Media Awards (see above). In his speech he pointed out that in spite of the political and socio-economic turmoil in various parts of the planet, 2016 has been good to date with a return to the 'second annual holiday' and noted increases both in couple holidays and luxury products. "Long haul student travel continues to grow and there is evidence of a growth in the four to five day leisure break", he added.

NEW FLOATING MUSEUM OPENS IN BELFAST

Following extensive restoration the World War 1 light battle cruiser HMS Caroline has opened to the public at the Titanic Quarter in Belfast. Visitors are offered a unique experience journeying back 100 years to what was a dangerous life at sea during the war. There are several exhibition areas and state of the art special effects. Visit the Captain's cabin, engine room, sick bay and gallery kitchen. Speaking about the new floating museum Clare McCoy, Tourism Northern Ireland's ROI PR officer said "the HMS Caroline is a world class heritage asset and offers both naval historians and the general public a fascinating insight into what life was at sea during the First World War. The complex restoration has resulted in many areas of the ship being largely intact since the day the ship was completed in 1914, making it a fantastic addition to the range of attractions marking the rich maritime heritage in Belfast's Titanic Quarter". The museum is open Mon-Sun from 10am to 5pm. More info available at Callsave 1850 230 230 or at www.discovernorthernireland.com.



HMS Caroline now open to the public.

Pic courtesy Tourism Northern Ireland

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HOLIDAY OFFERS

Spectacular Sorrento: Set on a spectacular headland beside a coastline considered to be one of the most magnificent in Italy with breath taking views of the Bay of Naples is Sorrento. The ideal base for exploring the Neapolitan region which is steeped in history with many famous attractions including Pompeii, Mount Vesuvius and Herculaneum, a real Italian treasure. Another possibility is to take a day trip to the island of Capri. Topflight, Ireland's Italian specialists, have some excellent offers for this month and next. During June the company has a number of special accommodation deals in 3* & 4* hotels, some on a half board basis. One example for July is a 7 nights stay at the 4* Grand Hotel Hermitage on B&B basis reduced from €979 to €869pps. All prices quoted include return flights, accommodation for 7 nights, transfers, taxes and online discount of €30pp. Click on www.topflight.ie

Ski Holidays: Summer has hardly arrived but already Directski.com is reporting a 'dramatic increase in group bookings'. Following the launch of their Winter 2016/17 ski programme the company has experienced a 20% increase in group bookings year-on-year. Directski.com advises early booking for your ski group in order to get both the dates and accommodation you want. This they point out is important particularly for high season dates such as Christmas, New Year and the mid term break. The top four resorts for groups recommended by them are Soll Austria, Pas de La Casa Andorra, La Plagne France and Livigno Italy. Prices quoted include return flights, return transfers and 7 nights' accommodation. Full details at www.visitdirectski.com.

ITAA Sports Deals: The Irish Travel Agents Association (ITAA) has listed some excellent deals for sports fans in the coming months:

Paddy Power Open Cheltenham, (11th - 13th November 2016) - from €459pp with Tullys Travel. This is the highlight of the Jump season comprising 4 days of sporting fun close to the Cotswold Hills. Stay at the 4* Jury's Inn Hotel a short drive from the course. Click on www.itaa.ie/2016/05/24/cheltenham-2016.

Abu Dhabi Grand Prix (25th-27th November 2016) - from €1455pp with Travalue.ie. A possible once in a lifetime trip to see the Grand Prix which is the Middle East's biggest International sporting event. Stay in the 5* Grand Millennium Al Wada located in the heart of Abu Dhabi. The beach front is just 7km, the city Golf Club 10km and the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque 14km. Full details www.itaa.ie/2016/05/16/grand-prix-2016.

Italy V Ireland 6 Nations 2017 (10th February 2017) - from €629pp. Dawson Travel have a 2 nights trip to Rome for this match at the Stadio Olimpico. Prices include B&B accommodation in 4* hotel, return flights from Cork, private transfers from airport plus service of tour representative. Match tickets not included but can be requested. Full details www.itaa.ie/2016/05/16-nations-2017.

Feel Pampered Along Camino: CaminoWays.com the specialists on walking and cycling tours along the various Camino routes are now offering clients the opportunity to experience 4* & 5* accommodation on the Via de La Plata route from Ourense. This new Superior Collection gives pilgrims the chance to stay in some of the best and most unique properties (including the charming Casas Rurales) along the way. "Our Superior Collection gives our clients an opportunity to feel pampered after a long day walking" explained Roland Monsegu of CaminoWays.com. Prices start from €850pps for the 7 night trip with half-board accommodation, luggage transfers between hotels, a holiday pack and a complimentary spa treatment in Santiago de Compostela. This particular route takes pilgrims the last 107kms from the historic city of Ourense to Santiago de Compostela. Available all year round. Note flights and insurance not included. Full itinerary and booking at www.caminoways.com

TRAVEL BITES

Anniversary of Emperor Charles IV: This year marks the 700th anniversary of the birth of Emperor Charles IV the Czech ruler who became King of Bohemia and later ruler of the Holy Roman Empire. The Embassy of the Czech Republic in conjunction with the Office of Public Works are holding an exhibition called 'Emperor of Four Thrones-A Life of Charles IV in Fourteen Steps' in the Apollo Rooms at Dublin Castle until 31st August 2016. Opening hours are Mon-Sat 9.45am to 4.45pm and Sundays from 11am to 4.30pm.

Events in Prague: Meanwhile in the very popular city of Prague the whole year is being dedicated to the 700th Anniversary and some of the top events taking place include:

The Czech Art Of Glass, (until 28th Aug) - a glass blowing concert in the Baroque stables and courtyard of the Toskanský Palace. See Czech glassmakers at work blowing, cutting and engraving the glass plus jewellery making crafts.

Prague Proms, (until 20th July) - a star studded programme of classical, film and jazz music.

Festival of Early Music (11th July- 4th Aug) - beautiful music of our ancestors performed by contemporary musicians at venues around the city.

The Food Parade (3rd-4th Sept) - Tastings, cookery demonstrations plus culinary novelties in the gardens of the Troja Chateau.

Henri Rousseau Exhibition (16th Sept - 15th Jan 2017) - the must-see autumn event featuring a major exhibition of works by Henri Rousseau one of the great personalities of European art. This is a joint venture by the National Gallery in Prague and the Musée d'Orsay in Paris.

Full list of events at www.praguepreview@prague.eu.

TOURISM NORTH

The year of Food & Drink continues throughout Northern Ireland with the emphasis this month on Dairy products. Ireland has a long history of producing dairy products such as milk, butter, cheese, yoghurt and ice cream and the delicious tastes are due in part to the very many artisan producers throughout the Province but the unique countryside can also take a bow. Events planned to allow the general public to visit and experience country life include the Bank of Ireland Open farm week-end (18th & 19th June) where you can see, hear, touch and be part of Northern Ireland's farming story. Over 20 farms will open their doors to showcase the farming industry. In Fermanagh at Tickety Moo, a visitor experience all the family can enjoy, there is a tour around the farm to see the cows being milked and ice cream being made. To find out the full range of activities during 'Dairy Month' go to www.discovernorthernireland.com/yearoffoodanddrink2016.

CRUISE AND FERRY NEWS

Irish Continental Group Order New Cruise Ferry: The parent company of Irish Ferries (ICG) has just entered into an agreement with a German company to build a new cruise ferry costing €144ml. It is likely the new ferry will be introduced on routes served by the chartered ship MV Epsilon which is used currently on year round services between Dublin and Holyhead and on the Ireland to France route at week-ends. The new cruise ferry will accommodate 1,885 passengers and crew with 435 cabins and capacity for 165 freight vehicles plus an additional car deck for 300 passenger cars. The company points out that the investment underpins the confidence of the Group in both freight and passenger tourism markets between Ireland, Britain and France. She is expected to be delivered in 2018.

Haven Summer Offers: Irish Ferries are continuing to roll out a number of Haven Holiday deals for families seeking a fun break at 8 popular Parks in Britain during this summer. Make a booking before 20th June and save €70 on a 7 nights stay (until 15th Aug), or a reduction of €45 on a 4 night break (until 24th Oct) by booking before 27th June 2016. Full info available from travel agents or at www.irishferries.com/haven.

AIRSIDE UPDATES

Fly SAS to Scandinavia: With the choice of Denmark, Norway and Sweden summer is the ideal time to consider taking a holiday in Scandinavia. All three countries are noted for good food, beautiful beaches and happy people, plus of course Denmark's world famous Legoland for the children to enjoy. SAS fly direct exDublin to Copenhagen, Oslo and Stockholm offering up to 24 flights per week from as little as €51pp one-way including taxes. Talk to your travel agent or visit www.flysas.ie.

New Route begins To Vancouver: At time of going to press Air Canada Rouge (Air Canada's leisure airline) was scheduled to begin a new seasonal route from Dublin to Vancouver on Friday last 10th June. Check with travel agent or www.flyrouge.com.