

Travel

Have a break with a difference

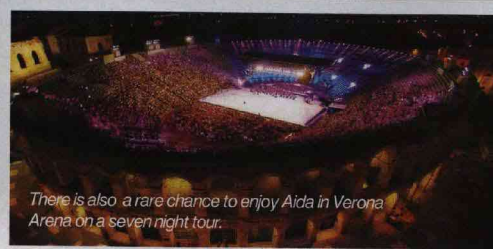
Lorna Hogg looks at some options beyond the ordinary.



The gardens at Highgrove



This year sees the first ever women only Camino walk



There is also a rare chance to enjoy Aida in Verona Arena on a seven night tour.

Sometimes, you're looking for a break with a difference, perhaps as a special anniversary gift, or striking out on your own. Alternately, you might want a group break with a shared or niche interest, to develop a new hobby, or even change your life. So, take your pick from one day to full holiday breaks with yoga, cookery, garden visits, walking, music, sports, eco living and even self development, at home or further afield...

Women lead the way..

The great pilgrim trails attract a variety of walkers, and 'Follow the Camino' Tours' have something for all of them, offering introductory meetings, advice and even some preparation here in Ireland.

This year, their first Women Only guided walk, celebrating International Women's Day filled so quickly that they are offering another one in June. Based in Galicia's Pias Baixas region, famed for its fresh seafood and Albarino white

wine, the trip cover the last 100kms of the Camino's Portuguese Coastal Way. Overlooking Atlantic views, visiting Baiona and Pontevedra en route.

Women on The Camino - June 25th 6 nights, 7 walking days €740 pps. including English speaking guide, half board accommodation and luggage transfers. Flights, insurance and lunch not included.

www.info@caminoways.com

Singing under the stars

For opera lovers nothing matches the atmosphere and experience of a performance in an ancient amphitheatre under the stars. Travel Department has something for all tastes - including performances in some of Europe's great opera houses. There are several Opera Holidays in association Lyric firm's Marty Whelan, including the 7 night Classic Tuscany and Puccini Opera Festival with a lakeside performance, with prices from €1059 departing 26th July.

You can also choose from a variety of short trips, e.g. 3 nights Budapest, to hear Verdi's Rigoletto, departing 17th June, from €549pp. This year, there is also a rare chance to enjoy Aida in Verona Arena, on a seven night tour. Topflight offers excellent 'optional extra' opera excursions in their resort holidays to Venice and Lake Garda, starting from €609. www.traveldepartment.ie Tel. 01 637 1650 www.topflight.ie

Gardens by Royal Appointment

Over the past three decades, Prince Charles has created a unique organic and sustainable garden over 15 acres at Highgrove, his private country home. There is plenty to inspire keen gardeners, from the old fashioned wildflower meadow, to urn-lined walks and even an old-fashioned 'Stumpery'. Travel Department is again offering tours, with gardening expert Frances Macdonald. The 3 night August tour offers a two hour tour of the garden, plus flights, accommodation and city tour in Bath Spa, trips to a plant nursery and the nearby Harald Peto

Senior Times



Memmo Baleira, Sagres



Titanic dinner

Italian garden at Iford Manor.
Prices from €729pp, 3 nights, flight and accommodation. 7th August departure.
www.traveldepartment.ie

Find it, pick it, eat it

There is a new way of now, not just fresh, but local, and free food. Many of us grew up with mushroom gathering, and blackberry picking, but foraging goes much further. Many local plants, flowers and even some that we regard as weeds, are edible. There are many courses and workshops available in Ireland, to search for, find and cook what you have gathered. Ballymaloe Autumn Foraging course - 30th September and 1st October €195.

Eco Active Ireland lists a variety of courses, ranging from wild food foraging at CrannOg Eco farm, to seaweed foraging and beach picnic in Waterford and Foraging walks in Leitrim.

www.ecoactiveireland.com
www.cookingisfun.ie

50 way to inspire your mammy

Fans of 50 Ways to Kill Your Mammy' admired Nancy Ashmawy for her bravery and adventurousness when faced with some of the TV challenges from her son Baz. Want to develop some of that spirit in yourself, and have plenty of fun? At the Give It A Go week in Killarney you can sample motor bike riding, abseiling, Pilates, yoga, hill-walking, abseiling, creative writing, photography, kayaking – and the list

goes on. Nancy will be around as well, to inspire and encourage! There are also seminars, an exhibition and nightly entertainment, dinners and a banquet, so boredom is not on the schedule. Attend as a day visitor (€25 per day) or buy an inclusive package at the Gleneagle and Brehon hotels, currently starting from €424 for a single room. Many experiences are free, but some carry a small fee.

www.gleneaglehotel.com
Tel. 064 66 71550

Four star room, four star food

Wouldn't it be great if your luxury hotel had restaurants of similar standard? Many hotels are now famed for their top rated food, and in the Northern Ireland Year of Food and Drink, there is a good choice. The four star Belfast Hastings Hotel Europa is especially noted for its breakfasts, using top local produce and suppliers. The luxurious Merchant Hotel in Belfast has an award winning Great Room restaurant and the less formal Bert's Jazz Bar, ideal for superb pre-theatre meals.

You would expect G8 world leaders to enjoy top local food with their deliberations, and they did in 2013 at Fermanagh's Lough Erne Resort. We can all enjoy the superb Catalina restaurant and less formal Bar and Grills.

Gourmets will appreciate a Titanic dinner, in all senses if the word, at Rayanne House Hotel. Overlooking Belfast Lough, their Restaurant, listed in Ulster's Top 3 Best restaurants, offers

occasional nine course dinners, based on the liner's last First Class menu.

www.hastingshotels.com
www.themerchanthotel.com
www.loughmeresort.com
www.rayannehouse.com

Bring your own yoga mat

What better way to enhance yoga than beautiful surroundings? Travel Department is offering a 5 night trip to Torbole, Lake Garda, with Yoga Dublin Studios. Led by Emma Burke Kennedy and suited to all levels, departure is on 14th September, flights, 5 nights B&B, 8 yoga sessions and a boat tour of Lake Garda are included. From €729 pps

The 19th October departure to Memmo Baleira, Sagres, inside a nature park, and overlooking the Atlantic on the Algarve, is from €799pp including flights, 5 nights half board and 8 yoga sessions.

info@traveldepartment.ie

Open access

Keen golfer, but based a long way from the K Club? Golf club members can take advantage of Bus Eireann's discounted coach travel scheme, to attend the Dubai Duty Free Irish Open, from May 19th – 22nd. Groups of 30 and over can also be eligible for a 20% discount off the Dubai Duty Free Irish Open ticket price.
privatehire@buseireann.ie 01 70324 20
Discount details from 1890 252 698