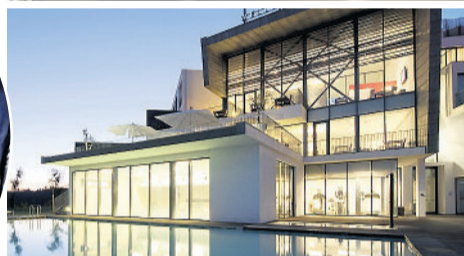


d TRAVEL AWARDS 2012



BEST WEEKEND DESTINATION: NEWCASTLE/GATESHEAD

It's no secret that England's city twins have some of the best nightlife in the UK. But the area's stepping up its game on a cultural level. Try the new Jurys Inn (beside the Millennium Bridge) and enjoy art in the neighbouring Baltic Centre, concerts in the Sage and trendy new clubs along the 'Diamond Strip' of Collingwood Street.

BEST LONG-HAUL HOLIDAY: ABU DHABI/DUBAI

With Emirates joining Etihad in the Irish market, competition is fierce and fares are keen. It's a shame that many people use these airports merely as long-haul hubs, as both cities have plenty to offer.

Dubai is the brasher of the two, with the world's tallest skyscraper (the Burj Khalifa) and hotels including the sail-like Burj Al Arab, one of the most iconic in the world.

Neighbouring Abu Dhabi is more chilled — but you've got to check out the world's fastest roller-coaster (at Ferrari World) or stay in one of its many just-opened five-star hotels including the St Regis Saadiyat, Jumeirah at Emirates Towers and Hyatt Capital Gate.

BEST TOUR OPERATOR: SUNWAY

A mainstay in the sun-package-holiday market, Sunway has stretched its horizons in recent years, offering a range of holidays to North America and far-flung countries, as well as dreamy destinations for honeymoons.

BEST LONG-HAUL TOUR OPERATOR: CRUISE HOLIDAYS

Part of the renowned Tour America organisation, cruiseholidays.ie offers a staggering range of cruise options — everything from the luxury of Cunard's Queen Mary to the casual cool of NCL.

There are plenty of bargains and expert advice, particularly for first-time cruisers.

TRAVEL INNOVATOR OF THE YEAR: CLEM WALSH

A mainstay of the travel industry for many years as marketing manager of Budget Travel, Clem Walshe is now the Irish face of lowcostholidays.ie, the leading one-stop online travel solution for Irish holidaymakers.

The site offers competitive flight seat rates with all the major airlines and tour operators coupled with a massive overseas ground handling network of 300,000 properties and private transfers from more than 450 airports in 70 countries across the globe.



www.twitter.com/heraldtravel

BEST FAMILY CRUISES: MSC

Cruising's one of the best-value sectors of travel — and MSC has cornered the market for those who want luxury at affordable prices.

Kids go free — even big ones up to the age of 18 — and all-inclusive drinks and dining packages mean you won't get a hefty bill at the end of your voyage. MSC is launching a new ship, Divina, with sailings around the Eastern Mediterranean from May 26 out of Venice.

BEST LUXURY CRUISE LINE: CELEBRITY

A sister line to Royal Caribbean, it's got many of Royal's key selling points — friendly staff, great nightlife and beautiful bar and pool areas. But if you want that extra touch of sophistication for a family occasion, look no further. Oh, and the lawn club — with its real grass greens — is a nice touch for an al fresco stroll on sea days.

BEST FERRY LINE: BRITANNY FERRIES

You're in France the minute you step on the Pont Aven en route from Cork to Roscoff. A la carte French dining, a patisserie and live cabaret all go to make the short overnight sailings seem even faster. And you're assured a decent sleep before your drive with its premium Commodore cabins which are similar in design and comfort to a cruise-cabin experience.

BEST LUXURY BRAND: INSIGHT VACATIONS

Bhutan. Sri Lanka. India. For a taste of the exotic hosted by local experts, this touring company offers the ultimate in once-in-a-lifetime trips. What's better, the hassle of booking hotels and transportation independently in far-flung destinations is taken care of. You're looked after by on-the-ground experts and its touring buses with business-class legroom and small group sizes ensure you'll immerse yourself in the local culture in style.

You can also make your euro stretch further by checking out its deals on everywhere from Britain and Ireland to mainland Europe, the Americas and beyond.



TONY COLLINS: He's Mr Ski — the man who's done more to introduce skiing to all than anyone else in the travel industry. And he's also responsible for countless Irish marriages in romantic Rome. He's not just respected in Ireland, he's also the Italian version of a British 'Sir'. Made 'Cavaliere' in the Order Stella della Solidarieta Italiana (Star of Italian Solidarity) for his work with his Topflight company.

HOTSPOTS: FROM TOP: Lough Erne Resort; Insight Vacations; Longevity Wellness Resort, Portugal

BEST SKI COMPANY: TOPFLIGHT

The multi award-winning Irish company has brought the thrills of the piste to countless Irish holidaymakers and put ski resorts on the map. It also has tempting Italian, European and long-haul holiday choices.

BEST HOLIDAY HOMES: TRIDENT

It's the perfect choice for staycation families — with luxurious and affordable properties nationwide, from short hops from Dublin to the rugged coastlines of the West.

Great deals are available, too, on the Trident Holiday Homes website (tridentholidayhomes.ie).

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