



01 *The ha'penny bridge in dublin, ireland, at night.*

# All eyes on Ireland

By: Claire Quinn.

Ireland's dynamic republic has come along way from joining the European Union in 1973. A country and economy still hiding its light under a bushel, when in January 1991, along with five other EU members it exchanged its indigenous currency for the Euro. The ensuing economic success in combination with this diminutive country's geographical location makes it one of Europe's hottest business tourism destinations. As a result Ireland's republic now offers a unique blend of fashionable cities, beautiful countryside, and high-quality hotels. Corporate guests can now expect cutting-edge conferencing facilities set against a rich backdrop of History and culture.

Travelling to and from Ireland has never been easier or more affordable. Daily direct flights are widely available from a range of cities in the UK, Europe, and the US, along with three-times-weekly flights from the Emirates. Ireland is served by two major low-cost national airlines – Ryanair and Aer Lingus – as well as dozens of international carriers, and boasts international airports in Dublin, Cork, Knock, Shannon and Belfast.

When it comes down to business this compact and dynamic country can hold its own amongst many of Europe's other favourite destinations.

Ireland can cater for up to 8,000 delegates with over 900 hotels and 60,000 rooms to choose from. Its strength lies in its ability to offer excellent conference facilities ranging from luxurious castles to state-of-the-art purpose-built centers. Amongst its best is The Royal Dublin Society, one of Ireland's largest venues for meetings, conferences and public shows; next up is Citywest Hotel, Ireland's largest Conference, Leisure and Golf Resort. Hot on their heels is The Convention Centre Dublin, designed by world-renowned Irish-born architect Kevin Roche, due to open in September 2010, with a capacity for 8,000 delegates. Last but certainly not least is the popular Irish National Events and Conference Centre in Killarney.

Figures taken from the Central Statistics Office show that in 2007 Ireland attracted well over 1 million business tourists, generating an estimated \$543Mn of overseas revenue. The figures are impressive but it can also bask in the calibre of events which have chosen it over recent years. In 1998 it hosted the early stages of the prestigious Tour De France. In 2003 the Special Olympics were held outside of the United States for the first time and choose Ireland as their base and in 2006 The Ryder Cup came to Ireland. >



Whilst the Irish are renowned for their luck this thriving tourism market comes as a result of joined up strategic thinking; in 2003 the Tourism Development Authority was established. Its public face, Fáilte Ireland, facilitates three key drivers in the industry's success. Essentially Fáilte Ireland develops products and enterprise, promotes best practice, quality and standards and facilitates investment in the industry's infrastructure. Lastly, by capitalising on Ireland's best resource it invests heavily in training and education across all career levels. Alongside this strategic body is Discover Ireland, a commercial information service that provides an extensive resource for anyone aiming to visit Ireland. Discover Ireland's website is bursting at seams with up-to-date leisure activities, accommodation to suit all budgets and an excellent cultural events calendar. Any organisation planning to hold a corporate event in Ireland will find a wealth of information and support across both websites

Whilst Ireland's tourist trade is well established it may not be the first choice for many European delegates when choosing their summer break. In this respect it will provide a breath of fresh air to those visiting for the first time. A truly unique country steeped in tradition yet young at heart. In such a historic country there are lots to do and see, and business tourists will love the rich selection of galleries, museums, restaurants, pubs and shops, not to mention the traditionally warm welcome from the Irish. For the more active visitors or those choosing team building activities delegates can enjoy an unspoilt landscape with an exceptional array of activities, including golf, horse riding, walking, cycling, water sports, angling and adventure sports. On the opposite end of the scale, visitors who want to unwind will find an unrivalled selection of Spa products, making their incentive one to remember.

World-renowned for their warm welcome and genuine sense of fun, the Irish people's enviable passion for life promises to entice colleagues and peers from around the globe, guaranteeing high delegate turnout.

Whilst current economic trends continue to clip expenses Irish Hotel costs are still well positioned within the European market to offer value for Money, customers then have the added bonus of Ireland's unique hospitality.

Those organisations which are being extra prudent should view Ireland as the ideal short haul opportunity particularly from the UK market. In addition its immediate location helps to fulfil the ever pressing CSR demands that most companies strive to achieve. Better yet, In July 2007 the Irish Government introduced changes to the entitlement of

02 *Dublin City Aerial View  
featuring O'Connell Bridge  
over the river Liffey.*



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businesses and delegates to claim VAT on conference related accommodation expenses. Any Irish or non-Irish taxable business entitled to recover VAT will be able to reclaim the VAT element of the accommodation expenses paid by them on behalf of their delegates. Individual delegates attending a qualifying business meeting and who are entitled to recover VAT, i.e. self-employed, can also claim. Several restrictions apply and those wishing to claim should contact Fáilte Ireland for details.

Conferencing in Ireland can be a trip of a lifetime where guests are treated to the best Ireland has to offer as a reward by their corporation. Within this delegates have an extensive choice of Activities. The island's compact layout allows guests to squeeze the most from their trip enjoying cosmopolitan cities juxtaposed with serene countryside. What is certain for all of those who visit Ireland is an authentic cultural experience where positive economic growth has not changed the nation's unique and friendly manner. ■



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