

# IRISH TOURISM STILL ON THE UP



For the 6th year running, Ireland has enjoyed massive growth in its tourism industry. Steady growth in the future is expected and the Irish anticipate the arrival of 10 million foreign visitors by 2010. The great news is not only that tourists are flocking to Ireland, with the biggest improvements coming from Nordic and Eastern European countries, yet that 98% of them are satisfied and plan to return. The result of the surveys is that the Irish tourist board Failte Ireland has set itself such high targets for the coming years.

Last year was a record year in the Republic of Ireland's tourism history as all figures were 5% up on the previous year. 7.8 million people passed through Irish ports and airports last year and left an astonishing €6.5 billion behind. €1 billion of it was accounted for by the Irish and Northern Irish themselves yet it is undeniable that the foreign impact was huge even in comparison with recent years. The question as to why Ireland is becoming more and more popular is on many peoples' lips. The answer involves a number of reasons.

One reason is that, after the so-called ascension countries joined the European Union, Ireland has received a huge influx of migrants from the likes of the Czech Republic, Poland and Estonia. The result is that citizens of these countries come to work and are frequently visited by relatives. Along with Great Britain, Ireland was the only European country to immediately grant citizens of the 9 ascension countries the right to work. Irish tourism has benefited from this. Furthermore, improved advertising campaigns have lent a helping hand and new facilities for conference holding have helped Ireland welcome a glut of business tourists. As business tourists tend to be high spenders, the facilities will continue to appear.

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