

TOURISM IRELAND'S 2012 MARKETING PLANS LAY FOUNDATIONS FOR RETURN TO RECORD VISITOR NUMBERS BY 2015

Plans Aim to Deliver Over 9 Million Overseas Visitors by 2015 – Meaning Tourism Back On Track

30 November 2011 – Tourism Ireland today launched details of its marketing plans to promote the island of Ireland overseas in 2012 and beyond, at an event attended by Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport Leo Varadkar T.D. and tourism industry leaders from around Ireland. The organisation's goal is to build on this year's return to growth in overseas tourism and to welcome over 9 million visitors to the island by 2015, exceeding the record year for tourism of 2007.

Details of a new global advertising campaign – 'Jump Into Ireland' – were also unveiled. The new Tourism Ireland campaign, which will launch in January 2012 in 22 markets around the globe, will include TV, radio, press, cinema and online advertising and will have an estimated annual audience of 60 million potential visitors worldwide. The soundtrack for the TV ads is a track from the latest album, *Fallen Empires*, of Co Down band Snow Patrol.

2012 looks set to be an exciting year for tourism, with major events like the grand finale of the Volvo Ocean Race 2011-2012 taking place in Galway and the annual Notre Dame-Navy American football game coming to Dublin's Aviva Stadium. In the second half of the year, Tourism Ireland will promote *The Gathering 2013* to the 70 million people across the world who feel linked by family, friends or otherwise with Ireland.

Tourism Minister Leo Varadkar said: "***Tourism has been a priority for this Government from the start. The sector currently keeps 180,000 people in jobs right across the country, and there is great potential for further job creation. So far the signs are good, with visitor numbers up 10% in the first nine months of the year. The Tourism Ireland marketing plan will build on this progress. We are now building up to the Gathering in 2013, which will be the biggest tourism event ever held in Ireland.***"

2011 Performance

Latest estimates indicate that, by year end, 7.4 million people will have visited the island in 2011, representing a +7% increase over 2010 (+9% increase in overseas visitors to the Republic

of Ireland). Growth has been recorded from all market areas including the vital Great Britain market. Revenue generated by overseas visitors is expected to be approximately €3.38 billion, a +10% increase over last year. Niall Gibbons, chief executive of Tourism Ireland, said: "**2011 has marked a welcome return to growth for overseas tourism to the island of Ireland, with visitor numbers forecast to reach 7.4 million for the year, a +7% increase on 2010 (+9% to the Republic of Ireland). This is good news for all of us in the tourism industry.**"

Competing to Win: 2012 and Beyond

Tourism Ireland's targets for 2012 will see the island of Ireland welcoming 7.8 million visitors during the year. This will represent growth in visitor numbers of +5.5% over 2011 and will set the sector back on the road to reaching visitor levels attained in the peak year of 2007 by 2015.

Commenting on the year ahead, Niall Gibbons said: "**2012 is about competing to win. While recent economic turmoil has brought increased uncertainty, affecting business and consumer confidence, the overall outlook for travel and tourism remains positive. Tourism Ireland will roll out an extensive marketing programme to capitalise on the strong interest in Ireland in all our markets. Our new advertising campaign will capture the essence of a holiday here and play to our strengths – iconic experiences and warm, friendly people.**"

Niall Gibbons continued: "**It is important to remember that people around the world still want to take holidays. The key trend is that people are continuing to travel but taking shorter trips, staying closer to home and being careful with their money, as value for money remains an important consideration when making holiday plans. We believe that the island of Ireland is well positioned to take advantage of this trend. Tourism Ireland will be working flat out to ensure that the island of Ireland increases its share of the global travel business in 2012 and beyond.**"

In 2012, Tourism Ireland will continue to work to counter negative perceptions of value for money and, together with tourism industry partners, will highlight the great value now available here.

'Brand Ireland' Today

The good news is that Ireland ranks high among the top destinations that consumers in our largest tourism markets (GB, US, France and Germany) would like to visit. The most recent Anholt-GfK Nation Brands Index (NBI 2011) shows that Ireland ranks 7th (out of 50 countries) as an aspirational destination in the US and France; we rank 9th in Britain and 11th in Germany.

Ireland scores particularly highly in categories like “makes me feel welcome” and “rich in natural beauty”.

TOURISM IRELAND’S FOCUS IN 2012

Tourism Ireland has identified a number of strategic areas to underpin its promotional activity in 2012 and support the growth in overseas visitors in 2012 and beyond. These include:

- **Rolling out a brand new advertising campaign:** The new ads will appear on TV in GB, France and Germany; in cinemas in GB and the US, Spain and Italy; on outdoor sites in GB; and online in every other market in which Tourism Ireland has a presence.
- **Targeting our best prospects:** Tourism Ireland will focus mainly on consumers who are interested in sightseeing and experiencing local culture. In certain markets, the organisation will also target consumers who engage in outdoor activities. The business tourism and golf sectors will also offer great opportunities in 2012.
- **Focusing on top 4 markets:** Tourism Ireland will focus on winning market share in our four key tourism markets of Great Britain, the US, France and Germany, which together contribute nearly three-quarters of all visitors to the island of Ireland.
- **Increasing sales opportunities:** Tourism Ireland will increase the number of platforms on offer to tourism industry partners, to help them ‘close the sale’ with potential visitors overseas. Co-operative campaigns will continue to highlight the increasing value that a holiday in Ireland has to offer.
- **Growing access:** Critical to Ireland’s overseas tourism performance in 2012 will be the level of air and sea access to the island of Ireland. Tourism Ireland will continue to work closely with airlines and ferry companies, ports and airports, to invest in case-making and co-operative promotional campaigns, to help sustain and grow demand.
- **Delivering for Northern Ireland:** With a year of major tourism events planned under the banner of *‘NI 2012*, 2012 offers an unprecedented opportunity to showcase Northern Ireland.

NEW GLOBAL ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN

In 2012, Tourism Ireland will roll out a new advertising campaign across its 22 markets around the world. The brand new suite of ads – for TV, cinema, press, outdoor and online – will present the island of Ireland in a way that clearly differentiates us from our competitors, capturing the essence of a holiday here and highlighting our strengths – iconic experiences and warm, friendly people.

While Ireland continues to enjoy an extremely positive image around the world, research has shown that in order to grow visitor numbers, we need to offer potential holidaymakers a more compelling reason to choose Ireland. Research also shows that overseas consumers feel their daily lives lack a sense of wonder and joy and that, when it comes to choosing a holiday destination, they are looking for an authentic, stimulating experience that will leave them feeling replenished and uplifted. The island of Ireland is very well placed to deliver this type of holiday experience. The sheer diversity of our icons and activities, coupled with the engaging and welcoming nature of our people, leaves our overseas visitors with a lingering smile that lives long into the memory, helping to mark a holiday here as ‘special’. This combination provides a more energising and uplifting holiday than other destinations; in essence, this is what distinguishes Ireland and gives us ‘stand-out’.

The tagline for the new campaign – ‘Jump into Ireland’ – is designed to convey a sense of playfulness and to reflect the immersive nature of a holiday here.

ONLINE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Tourism Ireland will also launch a new website in 2012 to enhance communications with potential holidaymakers across the world. The organisation will also harness the power of social media even more effectively and build on the success of its activity in this area during 2011; Tourism Ireland now has 550,000 fans on Facebook, making it the second most popular tourism board in the world on the popular social networking site, after Australia.