



The Northern Standard

Circulating in Counties Monaghan, Cavan, Armagh, Louth and Fermanagh



TRAVEL 2016

BY GEORGE KEEGAN



ANOTHER MAJOR ACHIEVEMENT BY O'HANRAHAN TRAVEL

The Travel column congratulates Mark Clifford and his team at O'Hanrahan Travel for their great achievement of being chosen as one of the best travel agencies in Britain and Ireland. Past winners of the Travel Agency of the Year Award for Ireland, O'Hanrahan Travel, based in Monaghan town was established in 1925 and continues to go from strength to strength. The latest accolade was the result of a poll carried out by the Travel Trade Gazette, a leading industry magazine for the UK and Ireland. An inaugural Top 50 Travel Agencies list comprising a number of categories, the best 3 High street stores from each of 10 regions, best 3 nationwide agencies, plus two special awards was launched some months ago and the results were announced at a ceremony held recently in Birmingham. O'Hanrahan travel was one of just five agencies shortlisted from the Republic and succeeded in finishing as runners up. Overall there were 500 contenders with 80 stores and businesses reaching the shortlist stage. Mark, MD of the company and at the helm since 1993 said he was delighted to achieve 2nd place in Ireland in such a prestigious list. A couple of weeks ago he was elected as one of eleven people to serve on the board of the Irish Travel Agents Association (ITTA).

O'Hanrahan Travel recently closed their shop in Carrick and will concentrate their business, including DM Tours (specialising in Agricultural Shows particularly in the UK), from their head office at Church Square, Monaghan. According to Mark bookings are already coming in for the 2016/17 Skiing Season. He points out that and by booking early you get the best deals and group offers. Upcoming DM Tours include the Great Yorkshire Show (11th July) and the Royal Welsh Show (17th July). For list of shows and holiday offers click on www.ohtravel.ie.

HOLIDAY OFFERS

June Sunshine With Sunway: Sunway have a range of self-catering holidays available during June with prices starting from €499pp. Destinations include Lanzarote (Puerto Carmen Apartments 4th, 11th, 18th), Menorca (Vista Blanes Apartments 12th & 19th), the Algarve (Presidente Aparthotel 4th), Fuerteventura (Villa Florida Apartments 4th & 11th), Gran Canaria (Monte Verde Apartments 4th & 11th) and Majorca (Verdemar Apartments departing 4th). Full details from travel agents or click on www.sunway.ie.

An Authentic Cuban Holiday: With the dropping of barriers between the US and Cuba it's reported that several American hotel brands are planning to



Madeira - a Sunway Holiday destination. Pic by G. Keegan

expand there and the first cruise ship arrived last week. Perhaps this is the right time to experience the authentic Cuba before it becomes a popular American tourist destination. CubaTravel are currently offering escorted tours with the option of pre-arranged packages or customised tours. There is also the possibility to take a cycling tour visiting famous cities and the countryside. Choice of tours are 'Land, Cigar & Sun Tour', 'Getting to Know Cuba' and 'A Taste of Coffee Tour'. All their packages cover travel dates between June & October 2016 and include return flights exDublin and Cork, accommodation, taxes and charges, (visas are extra at €25pp). T & C apply. Check www.cubatravel.ie.

New Adventure From Greenlife Tours: Climb Kilimanjaro with TrekkingBug.com is the latest and most adventurous addition to date from Greenlife Tours founded by Roland Monsegu. This company have become experts in organising walking, cycling and adventure tours throughout Europe for several years including the very popular Camino Walks and last year IrelandWays.com was set up with several interesting routes around the country.

Roland points out that climbing Kilimanjaro is a once in a lifetime adventure, "it is one of those trips we'll be talking to our grandchildren about", he says. The tour will depart in February of next year and involves taking the Machame route said to be one of the most scenic trails in the Kilimanjaro National Park. Those taking part will be rewarded with out of this world views from the summits and an exhilarating feeling of having conquered Africa's highest mountain. Professional specialist Kilimanjaro guides and hand-picked porters will accompany the group and Roland himself has led groups previously in locations such as South America, Nepal, Asia and New Zealand. An 8nights/9days tour costs €2529pps and includes accommodation (full board), airport transfers, guides and boutique accommodation in Moshi. There is also the option of a price package to include flights exDublin. Information evenings will take place around Ireland giving advice on fitness and training prior to the trip. For full details and booking contact info@trekkingbug.com

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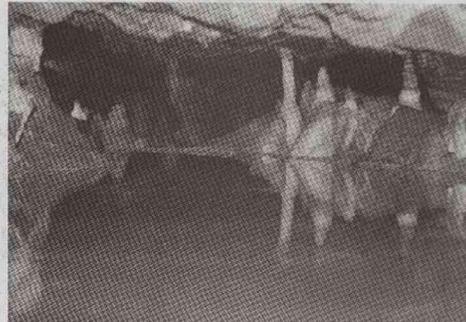
TRAVEL BITES

New president of ITAA: Conor Meehan owner of Meehan Travel an independent travel agency in Bundoran was recently elected President of the Irish Travel Agents Association (ITAA). Mr Meehan is the first President from an active agency in Ulster. The ITAA represents the country's travel industry with 100 travel agent members plus 70 affiliate partners covering 140 outlets in towns and cities throughout the Republic.

Michigan Tops As Movie Location: Michigan State is blessed with an unspoilt nature. It has the world's longest fresh water coastline with shimmering beaches, large areas filled with cherry orchards and superb sunrises and sunsets, all for holidaymakers to enjoy. However it may surprise some readers that Michigan is also a major location for movies. The latest of these is 'Batman V Superman: Dawn of Justice' which features locations in Detroit, Birmingham, Flint and Pontiac. Other famous titles include Eminem's '8 Mile' and during the 80s & 90s classics such as 'Die Hard 2' and the Beverley Hills Cop series. Visit www.michigan.org

Congrats To Sunway: Many congratulations to top Irish owned tour operator Sunway who last week celebrated their 50th birthday. The story began in 1966 when the family owned travel agency specialising in corporate and leisure travel was launched. Today Sunway a 3rd generation family business and winners of numerous Travel Industry awards are regarded as Ireland's largest Irish owned Tour Operator, offering holidaymakers the choice of 70 destinations worldwide. Choose from sun or winter holidays, the USA & Canada, Club Med, escorted tours, adventure tours, weddings and honeymoons and not forgetting annual visits to meet Santa in Lapland. The company employs over a hundred people in Ireland and overseas. Flights from Dublin, Cork and Shannon. A special video outlining the history of the company is currently on the Sunway website and YouTube. For details of holiday options pick up their brochures in your local travel agent or click on www.sunway.ie

New Attraction Opens At Cheddar Gorge Caves: Visitors to the Cheddar Gorge & Caves in Somerset (which the Travel column described recently) are now able to take a brand new journey from pre-history to the present day deep within the magical and mysterious chambers of the famous Cox's Cave. The title of the new experience is 'Dreamhunters-the Adventures of Early man'. This walk-through multimedia experience takes full advantage of one of the most dramatic settings in the UK to tell the story of how people in the distant past overcame fears and predators and protected their tribe. Using state of the art projectors, sound systems and lighting, images are projected on to the cave walls. Self guided tours last approx 30 minutes. Check www.cheddargorge.co.uk.



Inside Cheddar Gorge Caves Pic by G. Keegan

Sea Of Liguria Is Clean: A statement has been issued by the General Director of the Regional Agency for tourism Carlo Fidanza 'In Liguria' Italy, confirming an oil leak in mid April was controlled in a few days. The emergency zone involved only the Polcevera river, a stream flowing into the industrial area of Genoa. The sea of Liguria is clean for visitors the statement states and there are no bathing restrictions as a result of the oil spill. Liguria remains the region with the most 'Blue Flag' awarded beaches - recognition of clean seas, tidy beaches and quality services. For information on this lovely region go to, www.turismoliguria.it.

AIRSIDE UPDATES

Alicante From Belfast: Last week Aer Lingus announced some good news for sun seekers in Northern Ireland. There is now a 5 times weekly service from George Best Belfast City Airport to Alicante & Palma on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays in addition to daily flights to Malaga and Faro. In mid May further flights to both Malaga and Faro are set to commence. Full details on www.aerlingus.com.



Launch of Belfast to Alicante route. Pic courtesy Aer Lingus

New Ryanair Plan: Last month Ryanair unveiled what they term as a 'Always Getting Better' plan featuring a list of 2016 customer experience initiatives through service, digital and in-flight developments. There are a total of 16 initiatives to be rolled out in the coming year. The list includes a Leisure Plus bundle fare with reserved seats, priority boarding and 20kg bag allowance and improved Business Plus service with more flexible ticketing, more fast track airports and auto check-in. They also plan a dedicated groups website allowing groups to make and manage own bookings. On aircraft there will be new interiors with slim line seating, more leg room, coat hooks and LED lighting with less yellow. The Chief Marketing Officer for Ryanair Kenny Jacobs commented, "the continual drive to improve our customer experience has been reflected in the record passenger numbers and load factors we have had over the past two years and we are pleased to launch year 3 of our 'Better' programme, -- the one thing which won't change will be our low fares and we will continue to offer the biggest and best choice of destinations with the most on-time flights and fantastic on-board experience as we grow our fleet, traffic and routes". www.ryanair.com.

United Airlines Move To Biofuel: On 6th April 1926 a Swallow aircraft took off from Pasco, Washington on an airmail route to Idaho marking the beginning of 90 years of aviation firsts for United Airlines. Now the airline has made history again by becoming the first US airline to begin use of commercial scale volumes of sustainable aviation bio fuel for regularly scheduled flights. Other 'firsts' have included creating commercial aviation's first flight kitchen (1936), introducing live TV to the industry in the 1960's, the first US airline to order jetliners and first to fly to all 50 US states. Down the years it is estimated United Airlines has connected in excess of 4 billion people to over 340 destinations worldwide. www.united.com.