

Ireland Named Top Tourist Destination

(NAPSA)—Consumers have smartened up about where to go for advice of all kinds, and—when it comes to picking a vacation spot—one truism applies: When Frommer’s readers vote, travelers listen.

So you might want to pay particular attention to the results of the popular travel guide’s recent poll naming Ireland—known for everything from its historic castles to its incredible countryside—as readers’ favorite tourist destination for 2011. Among those left in the dust were Paris, Costa Rica, Turkey’s Cesme Peninsula, and Atlanta, GA.

“Ireland is one of the most romantic destinations on earth,” says Patricia Tunison Preston, who’s authored 15 travel books on the country and is widely recognized as the go-to person for pretty much all things Irish. “Where else can you find such a stunning array of quiet country roads, glistening rivers and lakes, uncrowded dune-filled beaches, meandering gardens and charming little towns with cozy pubs and manor houses?”

Know that the Irish have a rep for being happy to see you year-round, not just on St. Patrick’s Day. That said (and with a nod to all the other modern entertainment), here’s some of what cognoscenti agree are the country’s best “experiences”:

- **Kissing the Blarney Stone.**

Actually, this tourist magnet is only one reason to visit what’s arguably the Emerald Isle’s most famous castle (Blarney Castle). Sure, puckering up may—legend has it—leave you with the gift of a silver tongue, but the fortress’ surrounding gardens are so majestic they’ll surely take your breath away. And the Badger Cave and dungeons are just plain cool.

- **The great outdoors.** If the cowpokes in “True Grit” had had the kind of backdrop Donegal offers



Ireland’s history, beauty and warm-hearted people make it a great place for Americans to visit.

for horseback riding—beaches, countryside and mountains—maybe they would’ve been less quick on the draw. Plus, there’s sailing off of Ireland’s West Coast and sea kayaking in West Cork.

- **Pub-crawling.** Frommer’s calls pubs “the social heart of every village and town.” But the literary-minded should head to Dublin’s Davy Byrnes Pub for a hot whiskey to see where Leopold Bloom, the main character in James Joyce’s “Ulysses,” lunched. (Note: If you’re waiting for someone, remember that its clock is said to be set five minutes ahead in honor of both Joyce and Bloom.)

- **Strolling through a bog.** Yes, a bog. The Slieve Bloom Way (no relation to Leopold) is comparatively untouched by man. Behold its waterfalls, its scampering foxes, and contemplate the meaning of life.

If you go, Preston recommends CIE Tours International as the best way to enjoy Ireland. The company offers a choice of 25 different escorted tours, along with almost a dozen different types of independent self-drive vacations, with stays at B&Bs, prebooked hotels and deluxe and castle hotels. Prices for a six-day/four-night/eight-meal Taste of Ireland Tour start at \$658. For more information, call (800) 243-8687 or visit www.cietours.com/Ireland#1.