



Coláiste Bhréanainn,  
Cill Airne,  
Co. Chiarraí



The Travel and Tourism  
Programme in Ireland

Aldo Papone Case Study 2001

# SPORTS TOURISM

## THE IRISH EXPERIENCE

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IRELAND

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# 1. PREFACE

This case study is the result of a presentation made by the students of St. Brendan's College, Killarney at the GTTP International Student / Teacher exchange which took place in November 2001 in Philadelphia.

The completed work does not aim to be original in its findings nor does it claim to be exhaustive in the range of sports /activities analysed. It collates material which is already in circulation and it combines it with new material which has only recently come into the public domain. In that way it can claim to give a fresh overview of the development of sports tourism in Ireland as we enter the twenty first century.

Ireland is presently experiencing unprecedented growth and change. This can be seen politically, economically and socially. Many of the traditional images of Ireland have been changed quite dramatically over the last decade. Many more are being presently challenged. Within this context it is only fitting that, at this present time, we explore the sporting image Ireland presents to the world and that we look to the challenges that lie ahead for both tourism and sport in this country.

Hence the case study "Sports Tourism —The Irish Experience"

# 2. INTRODUCTION

Over the last thirty years Ireland has marketed itself as a country with:

¥A beautiful and clean environment

• An ancient history

¥An unique culture

¥A friendly, hospitable people.

Consequently most of the investment in tourism over that period has been in environmental, heritage /cultural attractions and in the building up of a strong accommodation base.

### 3.TOURISM STATISTICS

The most up to date tourism statistics are from 1999  
It is worth looking at these statistics to get an overview of the Irish tourism industry.

Overseas tourist visits to Ireland grew by 7% in 1999 to 5.9 million. This was the eight successive year of growth.

When we analyse the reasons why tourists visited Ireland in 1999 we find they came for;

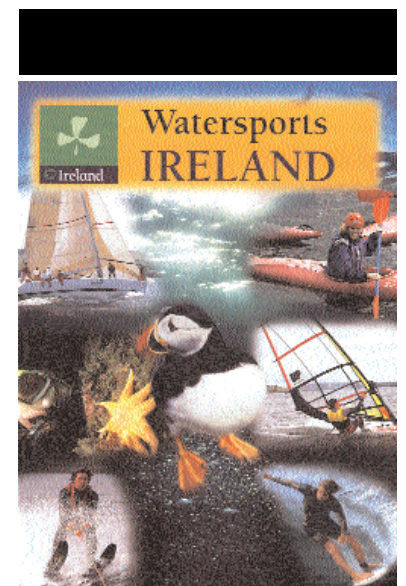
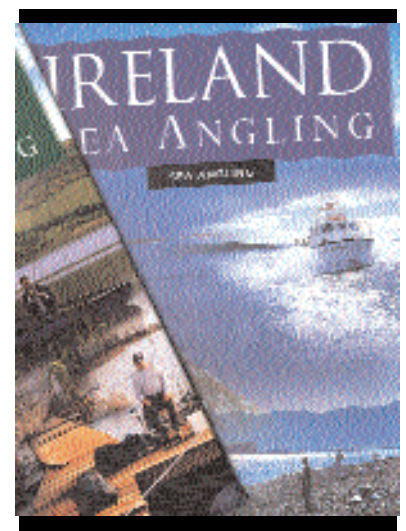
- ¥A holiday — 48%
- ¥ Visiting friends/relatives — 20%
- ¥ Business Conferences — 19%
- ¥ Other ( unspecified ) reasons — 13%

There is no evidence here that tourists are attracted to Ireland for sporting activities.  
From these figures it could be presumed that Sports Tourism is not a highly developed attraction in Ireland.

However when we look at the statistics related to the activities tourists engaged in during 1999 we get a different picture. Here we have clear evidence that tourists actually did come to Ireland to engage in some form of activity / recreation or sport.

- The following statistics bear this out:
- In Ireland in 1999 -
- ¥ Watersports /Sailing attracted 25,000 tourists
  - ¥ Hiking /Hillwalking attracted 266,00 tourists
  - ¥ Angling attracted 128,000 tourists
  - ¥ Cycling attracted 129,000 tourists
  - ¥ Equestrian Activities attracted 63,000 tourists
  - ¥ Golf attracted 198,000 tourists.

The numbers show quite clearly that roughly 800,000 tourists were involved in sporting / recreational activities while in Ireland in 1999. In real terms this confirms that one in every seven tourists who came to Ireland in 1999 experienced some aspect of the Irish tourism product.



## 4. PURPOSE OF CASE STUDY

It is therefore reasonable to state that sports tourism is an integral element of the Irish tourism industry.

In this case study we hope to explore the major role that sports tourism plays in attracting tourists to Ireland.

We also hope to highlight:

- ¥The variety of sporting/recreational attractions available in Ireland.
- ¥The potential for growth /development in this sector.
- ¥ How sports tourism is marketed
- ¥ Some positive /exciting developments which are presently happening in sports tourism.
- ¥What may be possible in the future.

## 5. SCOPE OF CASE STUDY

The most popular sports in Ireland are our traditional national games — Gaelic Football and Hurling. Both of these codes are highly skilled and have very ancient origins, which have been lost in the mists of time. We claim that hurling is the fastest field game in the world and Gaelic football is the probable precursor of Australian "footy".

However this case study does not cover the obvious tourism attractions of these unique and wonderful games.

Nor does it focus on the tourism appeal of regular international events such as The Six nations Rugby Championship and Ireland's involvement in all FIFA run soccer competitions.

All of these wonderful field sports attract tourists to Ireland and promote a very positive image of the country. It is estimated that between 10,000 and 15,000 foreign supporters attend each of the six nations rugby matches which take place in Ireland annually. It is believed that roughly 10,000 Dutch supporters attended the recent soccer World Cup qualifier in Dublin and it is estimated that about 5,000 Irish soccer supporters will travel to this year's finals in Japan and South Korea.

However the appeal of these sports is mainly to the domestic market and unfortunately for the purposes of this case study reliable statistics are not available for out of state visitors to these events.

60,000 spectators regularly attend our All Ireland Championship Finals in both hurling and Gaelic football but at this stage there are no scientifically collected statistics available to us which indicate that they are making an impact on the international market.

Consequently the focus of this case study is mainly based on those activities / sporting events where solid statistical information is available from the Central Statistics Office's Country of Residence Survey (CRS) and Bord Fáilte's Survey of Overseas Travellers (SOT).

## **6. SOME INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT GAELIC GAMES**

¥ Ireland's traditional games include four codes: hurling, football, camoige and handball.

¥ Camoige is the name given to the game of hurling played by women.

¥ Hurling, the most unique and traditional game, is said to date from pre-Christian times and is mentioned in some of the old Irish sagas.

¥ It is played between two teams of 15, each side having a goalkeeper, six backs, two midfielders and six forwards.

¥ The game is similar to hockey but is much faster as the ball can be played to any height and it can also be handled.

¥ The playing stick, known as a hurley, is usually about three and a half feet long and is made from ash.

¥ The ball (a sliothar) is struck by the hurley and players can sometimes strike the ball over distances of 100 yards.

¥ Goals are scored by sending the ball under the crossbar and points (three to a goal) are scored by sending the ball over the crossbar.

¥ Hurling shares many of the characteristics of the Scottish traditional game known as Shinty.

¥ Gaelic Football has features of both soccer and rugby.

¥ In this code players may handle the ball and it has the same team numbers and scoring system as hurling.

¥ The most distinctive feature of Gaelic football is the high fielding, a characteristic which it shares with Australian Football.

¥ In recent years efforts have been made to wed the best features of Gaelic Football with the best of Australian Football and an international series is held each year between both countries in this hybrid game called the compromise rules.

¥ Both hurling and Gaelic football, together with handball are administered by the Gaelic Athletic Association (G.A.A.) which was founded in 1884.

¥ Gaelic games are played at a local community level and at county level.

¥ All participating players are amateurs and the highlight of the Gaelic Games calendar each year is the All Ireland Final in both codes, which are held in September.

¥ The G.A.A. has many modern stadia with capacities in excess of 40,000 throughout the country. Croke Park in Dublin will have a capacity of 80,000 when it is completed in 2002.

# 7. SPORTS AND ACTIVITIES WHICH ATTRACT OVERSEAS TOURISTS

Let us now look at the sports and activities which bring tourists to Ireland. Let us also look at how these activities are marketed.

## A. WATERSPORTS

In 1999 watersports attracted 25,000 visitors to Ireland.

Ireland, situated on the edge of Europe, is a clean unpolluted island country with over 5,6000 kilometres of coastline and hundreds of lakes and rivers, making it one of the world's great watersport playgrounds.

Because Ireland enjoys a mild and temperate climate, with extreme conditions a rarity many watersports can be enjoyed all year round. The country has a small population and much of the countryside consists of wide open spaces of great natural beauty and variety which visitors can explore with complete freedom.

A wide variety of watersports can be found in Ireland and these include:

- ¥ Sailing
- ¥ Cruising
- ¥ Canoeing
- ¥ Surfing
- ¥ Wind surfing
- ¥ Sub aqua diving

## SAILING

Ireland has a very long sailing tradition. In fact the oldest yacht club in the world was founded in Crosshaven in Co. Cork in 1720. Ireland has an astonishing variety of sailing locations, both sea and lake, and sailing conditions are equally varied, with a profusion of clear waters, generous breezes and a remarkable natural beauty to enjoy in every direction.

Sailing schools are located at a number of centres around the Irish coast and the waters around Co. Cork and the South West are especially popular for both those learning to sail and for the more advanced sailors who wish to brave the challenges of our rugged Atlantic coast. For those who prefer to sail on more sheltered locations there is variety of venues particularly on the sheltered lakeland waters of the River Shannon.

Most sailing schools such as the Glennane's group are residential. The standards of tuition are very high and by following a course of instruction students can gain qualifications carrying international recognition. There has been a massive investment in the development of marinas over the last five years.

## CRUISING

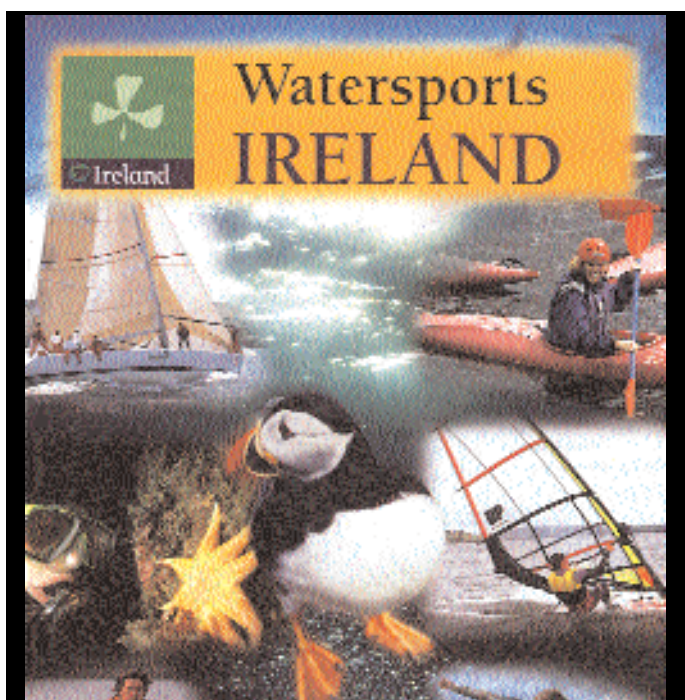
Cruising is an easy going and relaxing form of activity which appeals mainly to European and domestic family groups. The rivers Shannon and Erne are Ireland's main cruising waterways.

## CANOEING

The crowning glory of Irish canoeing is the Liffey Descent which takes place each September, close to Ireland's capital.

Some of the world's best paddlers participate in this event, when 30 million tons of water flood the river Liffey. This turns the river's small rapids into raging torrents and its weirs into foaming walls of water — providing one of the finest tests of stamina, courage and canoeing ability available anywhere.

During the summer months a more leisurely form of sea canoeing is available at a number of approved centres around the western coast. These centres are very popular with children who participate in watersport camps.



## SURFING

Ireland's perfect geographical position provides perfect surfing conditions, especially along the rugged north, west and south coasts. These coastlines are greatly indented from the constant pounding of Atlantic waves, picking up exciting swells and creating surf of the highest quality. For over thirty years surfing has been an organised sport in Ireland and interest in Ireland as a surfing destination continues to grow internationally. On many occasions Ireland has been the venue for the European Surfing Championships. The windswept beaches of Donegal, Sligo and Kerry can rightly be described as a surfer's paradise.

## WIND SURFING

Conditions on Irish waters are made for wind surfing. With steady winds all year round, with every possible wave formation and with hundreds of miles of open beaches the quality of wind surfing can be compared favourably with the best available in such renowned centres as Hawaii and the Canary Islands. This is reflected in the increasing number of tourists who are being attracted here for this activity.

## SUB AQUA DIVING

The waters off the Irish coast also have much to offer to the serious sub aqua enthusiast. Teeming colourful fish life along with a profusion of underwater vegetation plus the possibility of exploring of many interesting wrecks, many dating from the time of the Spanish Armada, make Ireland very attractive for tourists who are interested in this sport/activity.

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## B. HIKING /HILLWALKING

More than a quarter of a million overseas visitors participated in hiking/hillwalking in Ireland in 1999.

This sector has great, as yet untapped potential. For example, 29 million Germans engaged in serious walking during at least one holiday over the last three years and in 1995 according to UK tourism statistics British people took 3.2 million walking holidays.

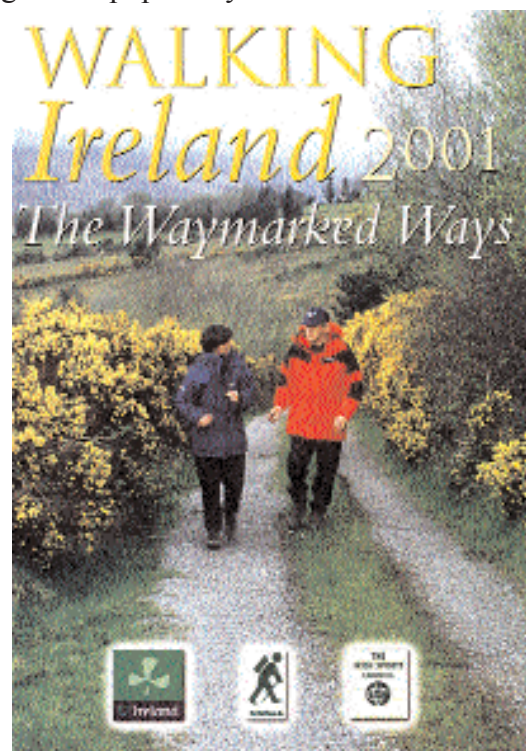
Ireland has a lot to offer the hiker /hillwalker:

- ¥ beautiful scenery
- ¥ peace and tranquility
- ¥ low population density
- ¥ an underdeveloped landscape
- ¥ low volumes of vehicular traffic.



Waymarked trails are a relatively new phenomenon in Ireland with the first, The Wicklow Way, opening in 1982. There are now 31 marked and developed Ways available in the country covering over 3000km. The ways have been established by local committees with the co-operation of Bord Failte (The Irish Tourist Board), Coillte (The Irish Forestry Service), local authorities and private landowners.

Overseas visitors engaged in hiking /hillwalking spent an estimated £115.4 million (US\$135.75m.). Hiking /hillwalking is the most popular activity based/ sporting attraction for tourists in Ireland and continues to grow in popularity each season.



## C. ANGLING

When the foot and mouth emergency arose early in 2001, the first victims included tourists who traditionally visit Ireland to fish on our lakes and rivers. Banned from crossing farmland they were obliged to pack up their rods and nets and head back to England and France leaving behind many unoccupied beds and empty bars, restaurants and disappointed accommodation service providers.

They were part of more than 100,000 anglers who visit this country annually, spending more than £100 million ( US\$118m. ) and representing the most traditional tourism activity in Ireland.

Angling has being one of Ireland s major tourist attractions for the last one hundred years. Indeed we have written evidence of tourists fishing in the beautiful Lakes of Killarney as early as the beginning of the 19th century. Consequently Ireland has a strong brand image for the main types of angling:

- ¥ Coarse angling
- ¥ Game angling
- ¥ Sea angling

As an island with 14,000 km of rivers and a coastline of 5,600 km Ireland has some of the cleanest lightly fished fresh and sea waters in Europe. Ireland s cool, temperate climate, its position on the Gulf Stream, its small towns , the absence of heavy industry together with low density of population has helped to generate excellent fish stocks These factors have certainly contributed to the development of a vibrant tourism niche market for certain parts of the midlands and west of Ireland.

There is no close season for coarse fishing in Ireland and so pike, roach and perch can be fished for in every month.

The essence of game angling is the pursuit of native fish in wild places. In Ireland, as elsewhere on this planet, conservation is necessary to protect the variety of fish in our waters. Trout and salmon fishing is fishing for sport, the enjoyment being in the challenge and not necessarily in the full bag. The native salmon, sea and brown trout can only be fished for during the season which lasts from early April until the end of September.

Consequently the game angler is legally required to be in possession of a licence when fishing for salmon or trout.

Irish trout fishing is mainly based around fly fishing and consequently the peak season for tourists is in May / June when the Mayfly is most abundantly available as bait. The majority of waters are owned either privately or by the State. Rivers like the Blackwater in Co. Cork, lakes like Loughs Corrib and fisheries like Delphi Lodge in Co. Mayo have established international reputations as they offer the trout/salmon fisherman a unique sporting and outdoor experience.

Sea angling is available to the visitor all year round. In all, over 80 different species including blue shark, conger eel, ling and cod can be caught in Ireland s seas. Irish deep sea fishing is associated with charter boats and is a very sociable form of angling.

The main centres of deep sea fishing are Westport in Co. Mayo, Fenit in Co. Kerry and Kinsale in Co. Cork . Irish shore angling is amongst the best in Europe and over the last five years an increasing number of prestigious international shore fishing competitions have been held in Ireland.

Coarse and game angling tends to be generally organised around centres, usually towns and villages in which experienced hosts specialising in angling tourism provide approved accommodation in their homes and hotels. Most of them have facilities for storing and drying clothing. Fridges, freezers and cold rooms are now very common so that anglers can store their bait. Most accommodation providers try to assist their angling guests by scheduling flexible meal times and supplying packed lunches and flasks. Most have boats with outboard motors on nearby rivers and lakes.

Several marketing groups have been established to promote angling in Ireland. These include Game Angling Ireland West, Irish Sea Angling Accommodation and Charters, Coarse Angling Ireland West, And Great Fishing Houses of Ireland.

## D. CYCLING

129,000 tourists participated in cycling in 1999. Of these 66,000 came from the north European market. 37% of cyclists travelled throughout Ireland alone, cycling was most popular in the 25-34 age group and the most popular location was the South West.

Once again the low population density, the peace and safety of our roads and the beauty of our scenery are crucial factors when tourists decide to come to Ireland on a cycling holiday.



The Irish cycling product is varied, catering for the needs and requirements of all participants, specialist and occasional cyclist alike. Cycling holidays can encompass an all — in package which includes guided trips, rent of equipment, accommodation etc.

If one prefers a more flexible approach there are "Go as you Please" packages. In 1999 it would appear that 76% of cyclists came independently and that on average they remained in the country for two weeks.

Walking / Cycling Ireland is a co-operative marketing group which has been established to promote cycling and walking holidays in Ireland.

Overseas visitors who engaged in cycling while in Ireland spent an estimated £57.5 million ( US\$67.6m.) in 1999.

## E. EQUESTRIAN SPORTS

The horse holds a very special place in Irish life and culture and is therefore one of the most enduring symbols of Irish sport for the many visitors who come here to view or to participate in equestrian events.

It is estimated that the recent Irish Champion Stakes which was run as part of the Arab Emirates World Cup in flat racing and which pitted the wonderful and unbeaten Irish thoroughbred Gallelio against the Godolphan trained Fantastic Light was watched by an audience of 200 million world wide. Irish bred and trained horses such as Arkle and Nijinsky, trainers such as Vincent O'Brien and Aiden O'Brien and jockeys such as Michael Kinnane and Pat Eddery have placed the Irish horse racing industry at a performance level that is envied by many other countries throughout the world.

Ireland represents one of the best environments in the world for equestrian pursuits with its cool temperate climate and varied landscape. Horses are said to thrive in Ireland because of the moist climate, which produces some of the world's lushest pastures, and the limestone subsoil, which makes the grass rich in bone building calcium. Hence Ireland maintains a well deserved reputation as a producer of top quality animals whose versatility, sturdiness, courage and intelligence have made them the choice of champions worldwide.

All these factors combine to ensure that the equestrian product offers a wide variety of holidays which include:

- ¥ Trail riding / pony Trekking
- ¥ Equestrian instruction
- ¥ Three — Day Eventing
- ¥ Show jumping
- ¥ Point-to-Pointing
- ¥ National Hunt racing
- ¥ Flat racing
- ¥ Thoroughbred sales.

In 1999 equestrian Activities attracted 63,000 overseas tourists who spent well in excess of £200 m (US\$235.3m.).

Pony trekking and trail riding allows you absorb the very essence of Ireland as you pass through some of the most beautiful scenery and

breathe in the clean air of one of the most unspoilt countries in Europe. In 1999 there were 230 approved riding centres and 18 trail rides which comprised of a variety of highland, woodland and coastal itineraries. Equestrian instruction courses with accommodation are very popular with tourists from the UK and Mainland Europe. Top class training is available in dressage, show jumping and cross country riding over banks, ditches, hedges and stone walls.



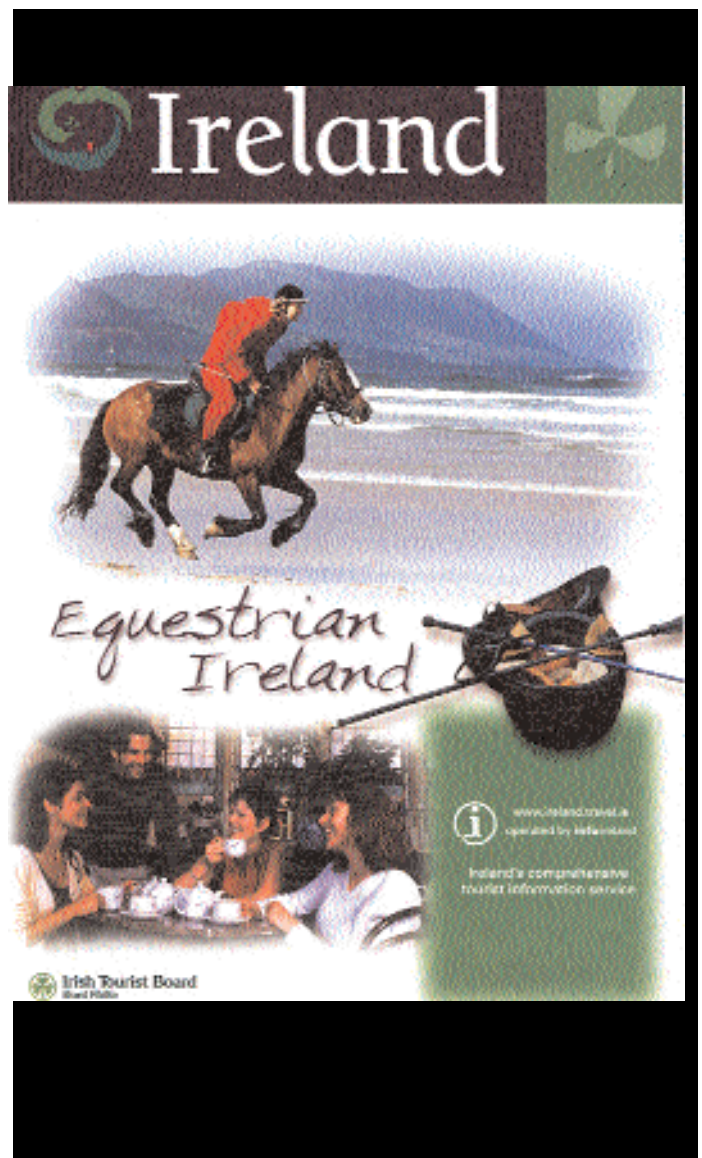
Ireland hosts three major international Three—Day — Events annually. These events which take place at Punchestown in Co. Kildare, Blarney in Co.Cork and Necarne Castle in the lakelands of Fermanagh attract all the world class riders and a considerable number of visiting spectators.

The Kerrygold International Horse Show held in Dublin in August is one of the world's top equestrian events as it offers the finest display of competitive international showjumping and acts as a showcase for Irish sport horse breeders. In this years Nations Cup competition the crack teams of seven countries were represented. It is estimated that anything up to 10,000 visitors from abroad may attend this prestigious event.

The pre-eminence of Irish —bred steeplechasers and hurdlers on the racecourses of Britain today is undisputed. Many British horse buyers are attracted to the point to point meetings which are held in early to late Spring mostly in Co.Cork and East Munster. These point-to- point meetings are seen as the training/schooling grounds of the future National Hunt champions of steeplechasing both in Ireland and Great Britain.

The major flat and steeplechasing events also attract increasing numbers of visiting horse owners, trainers and spectators mainly from Great Britain. These numbers are difficult to quantify but their accents are quite discernible at the major meetings which are held at Leopardstown in Dublin and at The Curragh in Co. Kildare. The most prestigious event of the Irish racing calendar is the Budweiser Irish Derby held at the Curragh in mid July. This race which attracts the best of Europe's three year olds is broadcast throughout the world and is attended by many international celebrities.

Goffs in Co.Kildare and Tattersalls in Co. Meath specialise in the sale of thoroughbreds. Their sales rank with the Keenland sales in Kentucky and the Newmarket sales in Great Britain and attract the interest of all the foreign bloodstock agencies. Once again no figures are available to indicate the number of visiting buyers who attend these sales.



## F. GOLF

Over the last decade golf has become one of the most important outdoor activities in Ireland. Golf has also become one of the major tourist attractions as many visitors come to Ireland to play our world renowned courses. Indeed Ireland is challenging Scotland, the home of this ancient game, as one of the world's premier golf tourism destinations.

198,000 international tourists came to Ireland to play golf in 1999 and this number is expected to rise to 450,000 by the year 2005.

The increase in the popularity of golf reflects the increased promotion and capacity of Ireland's golfing product. In 1987, there were 191 golf clubs registered with the Golfing Union of Ireland and by 2000 this has grown to over 386. Ireland's golfing product comprises links, parkland and heath golf courses. In fact, Ireland possesses approximately 30% of the world's links courses and this in particular accounts for the popularity of Irish courses with the North American golfing market. Links courses such as Portmarnock, Royal Co. Down, Ballybunion and Waterville are regarded as some of the best designed and most challenging championship courses in the world and hence their popularity with the golfing public.

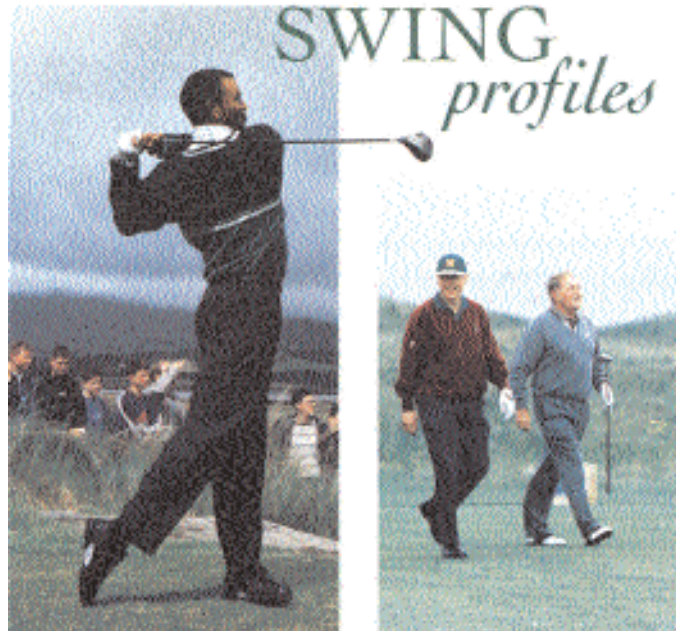
Many of the new courses have been developed on the western coastal region and have been designed by world famous golfers such as Arnold Palmer, Jack Nicklaus and Greg Norman. These formidable courses are challenging but fair and are designed to harmonise with the local environment.

Beautiful greens and lush fairways are located within easy reach of massive sand dunes and hazards laid down long before the game of golf was conceived. The golfer is challenged not only by the landscape but also by the changing weather patterns dictated by the south westerly winds and rain showers which blow across these locations. The quality of the golf here is truly matched by the serene splendour and beauty of the surrounding terrain—if the golfer is not fulfilling himself on the course he at least will be compensated by views of some of the most spectacular coastal scenery in Western Europe.

The awareness of Ireland as a golfing destination is heightened by the number of

world class golfing tournaments which take place here plus the high level of Irish participation on the professional and amateur circuits. Yearly world TV coverage of the Irish Open and The Smurfit European Open and endorsements of such world greats as Tom Watson, Tiger Woods, Mark O'Meara and Ernie Els who regularly practise on the Irish Links courses in preparation for the British Open

Championship help to give Irish golf a high profile. Bord Failte ( the Irish Tourist Board) run a comprehensive programme of overseas promotions at all the major international golfing events and at all the major trade fairs. A number of marketing groups such as SWING (South West Ireland Golfing Limited ) also promote golf on a regional basis.



What attracts the visiting golfer to Ireland is the easy accessibility and availability of top championship courses. Green fees are not expensive and tee off times are always available. The courses are not congested and nearly all are within easy reach of the major international airports or ports of entry. Golfing

packages are available which range from one day's participation to a full holiday programme which gives the visitor the opportunity to play a number of courses.

In 1999 overseas visitors who played golf while in Ireland spent an estimated £104.1 million (US\$122.5m.) Most were repeat visitors and most spent a week or two weeks in the country. The majority of golfers came from the UK and from North America and there is evidence that the Asian market is growing considerably. Market research is telling us that an increasing number of Japanese and Korean golfers are being attracted by the Irish golf tourism product and that in the years to come this is the market we should promote.

Ireland's selection as the location for the Ryder Cup in 2005 (delayed now until 2006) is already providing greater opportunities to promote Ireland as one of the world's premier golfing destinations.



## GOLF IN KILLARNEY

- ¥ There are six golf courses in the town
- ¥ There are twelve others within a 30 mile radius of the town
- ¥ The Killarney Killeen Course has hosted the Irish Open on two occasions in the last decade as well The Curtis Cup and other well known international events
- ¥ The annual green fee turnover at Killarney Golf Club is well in excess of £1.5m (2m )
- ¥ A number of local hotels concentrate exclusively on the Golf Tourism market — e.g. Killeen House

## G. OUTDOOR PURSUITS

Ireland is blessed with an environment/landscape, which lends itself to outdoor pursuits. We have highlands and coastal areas all within easy reach of urban centres and we have a climate which is activity/sports friendly.

Excluding the activities/sports already highlighted, in Ireland there are a variety of outdoor pursuit centres located throughout the island. Once again most of these centres are found in the West and South West and the better known include the centre at Delphi, Co. Mayo and Cappanalea in Co. Kerry.

Some of these centres are privately owned, while others are community run. They offer activities such as abseiling, orienteering, rock climbing, mountain climbing, canoeing and fishing.

Accommodation and equipment rental are generally included in the package. Outdoor pursuit activities appeal to visitors from mainland Europe and to the domestic market and in particular to teenagers /young adults and school / college groups.

However the market is changing as this present generation becomes more health conscious. Many outdoor pursuit centres are now providing a more sophisticated package for tourists which includes hydrotherapy, thalasotherapy etc.

The popularity of these activities continues to grow but unfortunately statistics are not presently available.

# 8. SPORTS TOURISM - GOVERNMENT POLICY

## POLICY IN THE PAST

Traditionally the Irish Government supported the promotion of Sports Tourism through the agency of the Irish Tourism Board ( Bord F ilte). This mainly involved supporting such annual events as The Kerrygold International Horse Show. Apart from indirect involvement in events like this governmental involvement was mainly passive.

In 1990 the Irish soccer team qualified for the World Cup Finals in Italy. This was the first time Ireland participated at this stage of the tournament. We were eventually beaten by the host country in the quarter finals but not before the whole island was captivated by world cup fever. Roughly 20,000 Italians visited Ireland in 1989 but by the following year this number had increased to 100,000. It was obvious that the Irish team and supporters had impacted on the Italian public and that they had promoted their country at an unconscious level.

This lesson was not lost on tourism strategists and the government.

It was clear that sport and the international success of Irish sportsmen and women could be used to promote Irish tourism. In the succeeding years the Irish Government quite actively marketed Ireland through their direct involvement with a number of leading sports personalities which included the cyclist Sean Kelly, athletes - Eamonn Coghlan and Sonia O Sullivan, show jumper Eddie Macken and grand prix racing manager Eddie Jordan. All of these personalities were contracted to act as sporting tourism ambassadors for Ireland and sponsorship was made available for their endeavours. For example throughout the nineties the Jordan Grand Prix Racing Team carried the Irish colours as a logo on its cars at all the international circuits.

## CURRENT POLICY

The exceptional growth of the tourism industry in Ireland over the last five years has complemented the well documented growth of our booming "Celtic Tiger" economy. During that period the Irish Government has actively committed itself to attracting major international sporting events to Ireland. In 1998 Ireland hosted both the first stages of the Tour de France (never before held outside mainland Europe) and the Tall Ships Race. More recently, Ireland has successfully bid for the 2003 World Summer Special Olympics and for the 2006 Ryder Cup Matches.

None of this would be possible without government support and in 1999 the Government launched The International Tourism Initiative.

A fund of £2.5million (US\$2.95m.) annually over a three year period 2001-2003 was made available to support efforts to attract major sporting events, with tourism potential, to Ireland.

Subsequently in the 2001 budget Estimates, an additional £2.5 million (US\$2.95m.) was made available on an annual basis to 2005, bringing the total fund to £22.5 million. (US\$26.55m.)

The Minister for Tourism, Sport and Recreation, Dr. James McDauid says,

" My department and Bord F ilte working closely together, have been quick to realise the huge potential of international sporting events for Irish tourism. Seeking to win these events for Ireland is a serious , carefully considered business strategy that has the potential to earn millions of pounds for Irish tourism, and therefore for our national economy."

The work of targeting major sporting events and administering the fund is being undertaken by Bord F ilte under the guidance of the Sports Tourism Partnership Advisory Group. This is a group of prominent sports, business and tourism experts which is chaired by the Chief Executive of Bord F ilte.

Supported events which have already been held include: The 2000 European Fireball Sailing Championships, The World Laser and

Master Championships, The North West of Ireland Golf Classic, PWA Irish wave Grand Prix and the World Junior Taekwondo Championships which took place in our own town of Killarney.

Funding approval has been announced for fifteen forthcoming events including: The World Cross Country Championships ( this event was cancelled in 2001 as a foot — and — mouth precaution), The European Figure Skating Open, The Seve Golf Trophy ( last years inaugural event was televised in 20 countries) and The American Express World Golf Championships which takes place at Mount Juliet, Co. Kilkenny in September 2002.

All new international sporting events taking place in Ireland up to 2005 are eligible for consideration. These events can be once-off events but are preferably annual /regular events on a circuit. This would enable Ireland to become a permanent fixture on the tour for that sport. Bord F ilte is also targeting all international sports governing bodies and event management companies to consider Ireland for forthcoming international sporting events.

The criteria for selecting an event for funding assistance include:

¥ Regionality — the aim here is to spread the benefits of tourism, as much as possible across the regions.

¥ Seasonality — the emphasis will be on increasing tourism traffic outside the peak summer months.

¥ Yield — the aim here is that economic yield to the tourism sector will be greater than the economic investment in the project.

¥ Televised Exposure — this will take into account exposure into Bord F ilte s priority markets, in particular the US, Britain and Australasia.

¥ Other Media — this means the ability to generate publicity and promotion for Ireland through additional media streams outside of televised exposure.

¥ Prestige — this means the capacity to lend prestige to the image of Ireland as a host nation.

¥ Carry Through — this means the potential ability of an event to entice repeat visitation from spectators and /or competitors.

¥ Benefits — how can Bord F ilte and Ireland benefit from their involvement in the event: how Ireland can benefit from title sponsorship, host nation status, on site signage, press conference involvement, internet opportunities, TV publicity, presentation format to include governmental involvement etc.?

¥ Future Events — will the hosting of this event lead to future event opportunities in this sport?



**A world golf championship will be held in Ireland for the first time when the American Express Championship takes place at Mount Juliet Estate, Co. Kilkenny in September 2002. The Championship is being assisted by the International Sports Tourism Initiative fund.**

**Pictured at the launch were (left to right): Keith Waters, PGA European Tour; Dr. James McDaid, Minister for Tourism, Sport and Recreation; Dr. Tim O Mahony, Chairman, Mount Juliet Estate; and John Dully, Chief Executive, Bord F ilte.**

# 9. EXCITING FUTURE EVENTS / DEVELOPMENTS IN SPORTS TOURISM

## A. THE 2003 SPECIAL OLYMPICS

## B. THE RYDER CUP 2005 /6

## C. THE CAMPUS IRELAND CONCEPT

### A. THE 2003 SPECIAL OLYMPICS

*"Share the feeling"*

In June 2003 the Special Olympics world games will take place in Ireland. This will be the largest sporting event ever to take place in Ireland and the largest in the world in 2003.

This is the first time that this major event will be held outside of the United States.

From June 16th-29th, 7000 special Athletes from 160 countries will come to Ireland to participate in this unique celebration of sporting achievement. They will be accompanied by 3000 coaches and official delegates as well as 28,000 family members and friends. This will be the largest sporting /cultural event that has ever taken place in Ireland.

It is estimated that 500,000 spectators will attend the various events

1500 members of the media from all around the world will cover the event directly from Ireland.

All the major TV broadcasting networks

throughout the world will cover the Games. Hence the games will have a global audience and appeal.

30,000 volunteers will be recruited to help run the games.

The sports included in the Special Olympics World Summer Games 2003 will include Aquatics, Athletics, badminton, Basketball, Bocce, Bowling, Cycling, Equestrian sports, Football, Golf, Gymnastics, Powerlifting, Sailing, Softball, Table Tennis, Tennis, Team handball, and Volleyball.

The cost of staging the games will be £24 million (US\$28.32m.). The Irish Government has already committed £5 million (US\$5.9m.). Bank of Ireland are the Premier Partners contributing £2.25 million (US\$2.65m.) and plans are underway to raise the remaining £16.75 million (US\$19.76m.) through sponsorship and in kind support.

The mission of the Special Olympics World Summer games 2003 is:  
" to provide in Ireland a unique and unparalleled sporting and cultural experience for the athletes taking part, from Europe and all over the world, as well as their coaches, families, volunteers, and sponsors, combining the excitement of sport which the opportunity for personal distinction and pride."

The Games and competition will be centred around the greater Dublin area at 18 venues. Competition will take place at a variety of venues and locations including Morton Stadium, The RDS, The National Basketball Arena, Kill International Equestrian Centre, the National Badminton Centre and the Phoenix Park. The opening and closing ceremonies will take place in the newly refurbished Croke Park which when completed will be able to accommodate 80,000 spectators.

However the entire island of Ireland both North and South will have an opportunity to play an integral part in the event. A feature of these World Games will be the Host Town Programme where all the participating teams will be hosted by local communities from the 16th —20th June 2003. Each team will have an

In the past there has been a trend towards linking major events to the games such as major conferences on disability organised independently by universities or corporations.

There should also be an ongoing effect on tourist revenues as tourists will be attracted to the country in subsequent years due to media coverage and return visits by families, media etc. Tourism revenue will also accrue in the two years preceding the Games.

Employment will be created in the Irish economy in the preparatory period and during the year of the Games. The games organising Committee (GOC) will employ 50 people full time for three years. A conservative estimate is that the at least 1000 additional jobs will be created during the year of the Games.

In the period before and during the Games, Ireland will be the focus of world - wide attention and assured of widespread media coverage.

The games should enhance Ireland's self image and image abroad as a caring and welcoming community where people with disability are treated with respect and dignity.

The games should provide an impetus to sport in Ireland as well as acting as a stimulus to improving sports facilities generally.

The entertainment programme for the athletes will involve major cultural events including the opening and closing ceremonies. This should give an opportunity to Irish artists and cultural groups to portray their skills and talents on a world - wide stage.



## B. THE RYDER CUP 2005 /6

*"A Natural Home for the Ryder Cup"*

On Wednesday, 26 August 1998, in Munich, Germany an agreement was signed between the Irish Minister for Tourism, Sport and Recreation and the PGA European Tour. This agreement confirmed that the Ryder Cup matches in 2005 would take place in Ireland.

This decision confirmed that Ireland has one of the premier international standings in this sport. It also confirmed the success of the Government's sports tourism strategy of targeting and attracting world sporting events to Ireland where we know as a nation we can deliver.

As we enter the 21st century it is recognised that golf has become our single biggest sporting holiday attraction. Each year the numbers playing on our beautiful courses continues to grow. It is estimated that by the year 2005 the number of international visitors who will travel to Ireland specifically to play golf is expected to have risen to 450,000, more than double the current figure.

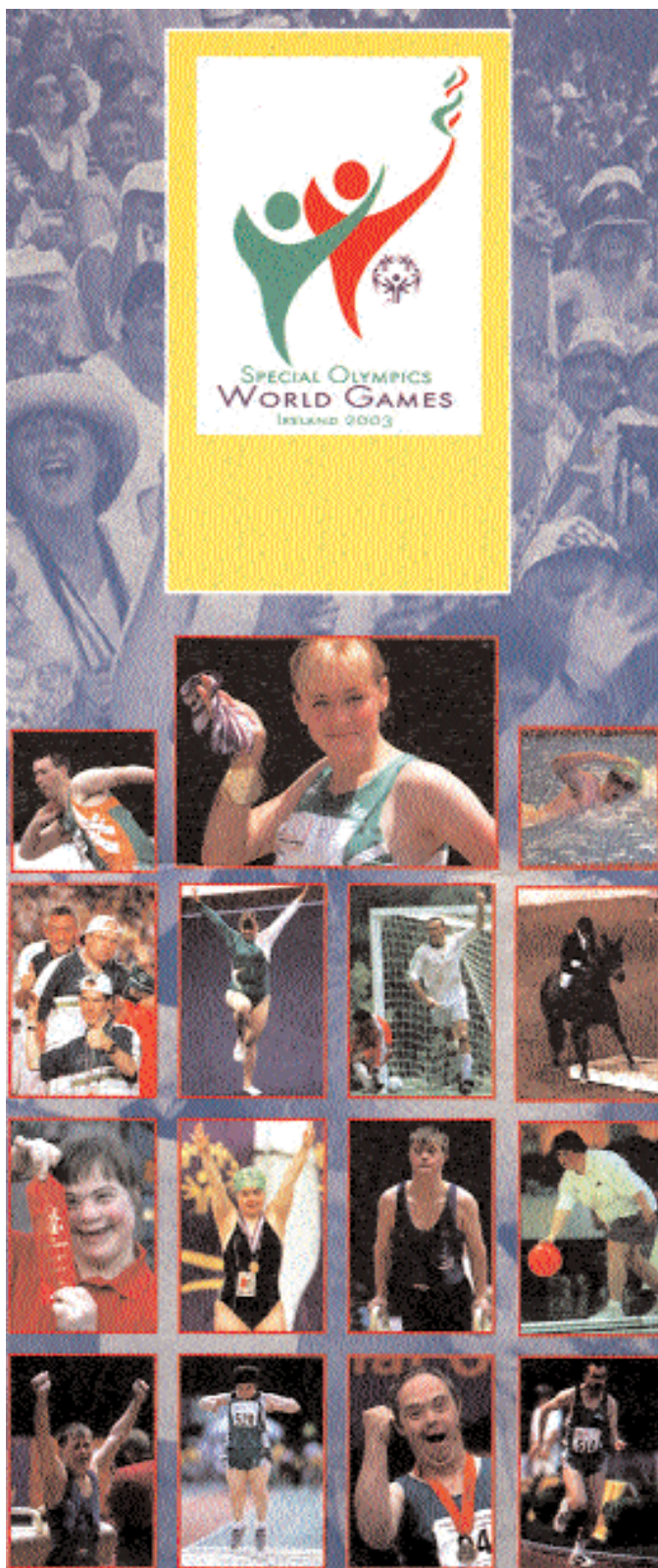
Unfortunately this year's event was postponed until 2002 because of the September 11th outrage in New York and that means the Ryder Cup will not now come to Ireland until 2006.

The Ryder Cup of 2006 will be played in the K Club in Co. Kildare.

It will attract around 20,000 international visitors over the four days of play.

It will be beamed into 300 million homes world wide.

opportunity to relax, acclimatise and train in locations outside Dublin before moving to their games accommodation on June 20th.



## Tourism Benefits to Ireland of Hosting the Games

The World Games are a major event in the lives of the participants and their families. Experience of previous Games highlights that the entire family usually travels with the

participant to celebrate the event. On average four people travel with each participant. They stay with a family in the Host Towns for three to four days before the Games and with a family in the Host City for approximately ten days of the Games. Many may choose to prolong their holiday having travelled long distances to attend. It is estimated therefore that some 28,000 tourists from up 160 countries, will accompany participants for an average stay of 14 days.

Experience of previous games shows the demographic profile of these tourists to be slightly older, more educated and with higher incomes than the average tourist. Many, if not most, are likely to be first time tourists to Ireland. As they will be staying with local families for bed and breakfast under the Host a family Programme, their expenditure will be mainly on goods and services within the economy and there should be very little if any displacement effect.

As part of the Host Town Programme, the families will be widely dispersed to 143 centres throughout the country for the three to four days before the Games. This will spread the tourism benefits of the Games throughout the country particularly to towns which are not normal tourist destinations.

According to figures supplied by Bord Fáilte the average amount of money spent per tourist is £304 ( US\$358) for an average stay of 10.5 days, including spending on bed and breakfast. This is the average for the full range of visitors to Ireland. For most families the games is a holiday of a lifetime which they have planned for several years. On the basis of the profile of the visitors involved and the experience of previous Games it is reasonable to assume that each party of five including the participant would spend approximately £1,600 (US\$1888) in the country over 14 days. This would generate £11.3 million ( US\$13.3m.) in additional tourism expenditure in the year of the Games.

Additional tourism revenue will arise from spending by coaches, officials, special guests, media personnel etc.

There is also evidence that sponsors use the games extensively to entertain clients.

Aer Lingus (The National airline), AIB (Ireland's premier Bank) and Waterford Crystal have joined with Bord F ilte as commercial partners for this event. The four partners will trade under the title Ireland Inc. This group aims to maximise the publicity and promotional opportunities for Ireland in the lead up to 2006.

As part of these publicity and promotional opportunities, Ireland will have promotional stands at the fifteen Ryder Cup qualifying events on the PGA European tour Calendar in each Ryder Cup year up and including 2006.

In the US Ireland will also undertake extensive publicity and promotional campaigns during all the major golf championships over the next four years. The message will be clear:

" Ireland will play host to the Ryder Cup in 2006 and we look forward to seeing you there".

## C. SPORTS CAMPUS IRELAND

*" A Vision of the Future"*

The substantial Government commitment to sports tourism has been clearly demonstrated most recently by the official launch of the Sports Campus Ireland project.

Sports Campus Ireland will include:

- ¥ 80,000 seat state — of — the - art National Stadium
- ¥ 50m Olympic Standard Swimming pool
- ¥ 15,000 seat multi —purpose indoor arena
- ¥ Indoor / outdoor training facilities for all sports
- ¥ Sports science and medical centre
- ¥ Headquarters of National governing Bodies of sport
- ¥ Athletes accommodation
- ¥ Tennis centre
- ¥ Golf Academy
- ¥ Velodrome
- ¥ 100 acre parkland
- ¥ Major children's play/educational facility
- ¥ Hotels, restaurants and parking facilities.

The concept of Sports Campus Ireland is rooted in the belief that strategic investment made today will realise significant benefits for future generations.

The Government firmly believe that investment in this project

- will contribute much to national prestige and our sense of national pride
- will act as a catalyst for the development of sport in Ireland
- will provide Irish sports competitors and sporting organisations with facilities that rank with the best in the world
- will provide an international showcase for the confident, dynamic Ireland of the 21st century
- will provide Ireland with the opportunity to attract major international sporting events such as The European championships in the various codes and even perhaps at some time in the future make it possible to host the Summer Olympic Games in Ireland



*A Natural Home for the*  
**RYDER CUP 2005**

**RYDER CUP 2005**



Ireland, a golfer's paradise, with every shape, size and shade of green and the friendliest 19th watering hole on the circuit, Ireland has produced more than her share of Ryder Cup contenders and welcomed many of the greats, including Gallacher, Langer, Galdo and Montgomerie.

- Most importantly it will attract tourists in increasing numbers to Ireland.

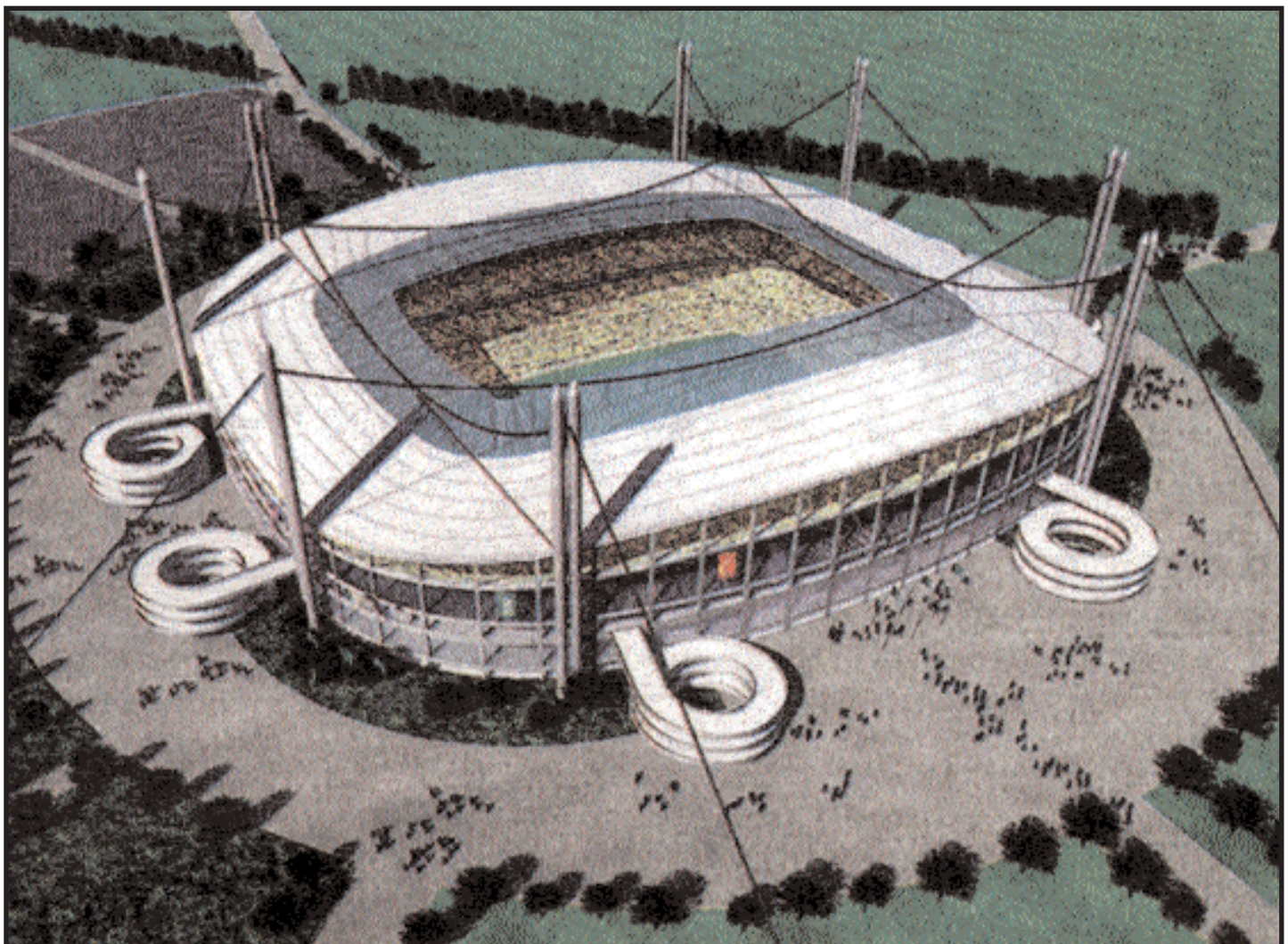
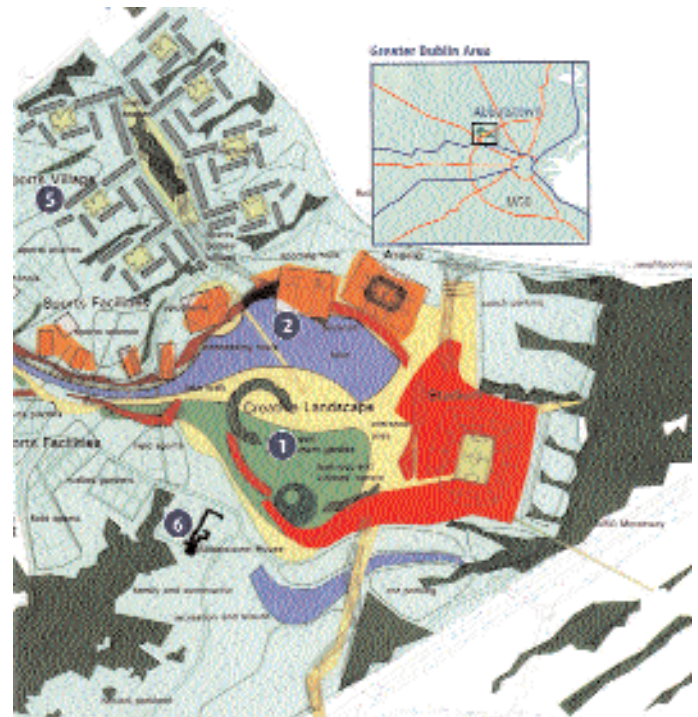
The National Stadium is expected to be operational by the year 2005. The whole complex should be completed by the year 2007.

The total cost of the project is presently estimated at £600m (US\$708m.) The Exchequer will contribute £350m (US\$413m.), the private sector contribution will be £150m (US\$177m.) and other donations will amount to £50m (US\$59m.).

It is estimated that with a minimum number of six major sporting /cultural events annually that the National Stadium has the potential to break even.

Projections for the number of out of state visitors that are likely to visit the Stadium and Campus during these six annual events is 20,000 extra tourists per year with an estimated spending revenue of £8.1m. (US\$9.55m.).

It is also likely that the sporting events which take place in the new National Stadium will make a considerable contribution to off peak tourism performances.



# 10. CONCLUSION

We hope that our case study clearly shows that:

- ¥ Ireland has a climate, environment and a geographical location which is ideally suited for sporting and recreational activities
- ¥ Sports Tourism is a vital element of the Irish Tourism product
- ¥ Sports Tourism contributes handsomely to the Irish economy
- ¥ There are a variety of sporting and recreational activities available in Ireland
- ¥ There is great potential for growth in these areas
- ¥ The international tourism market is being increasingly attracted to Ireland because of these attractions
- ¥ The Irish Government has developed and invested heavily in a national sports tourism strategy
- ¥ Over the next decade Ireland is to host major international sporting events which will present the country as a dynamic confident and hospitable nation
- ¥ These international events will act as a showcase for Ireland as a premier sports tourism destination.

## THE VITAL QUESTION

In 1990 the then Lord Mayor of Dublin suggested that Dublin / Ireland should be prepared to make a bid for the Olympics. He was at the time laughed at but ten years on his dream is coming closer to reality.

Over the last decade Ireland has progressed economically and has developed new tourism and sporting infrastructures. The political stability established throughout the entire island and the economic miracle of the "Celtic Tiger" have instilled a new sense of confidence and ambition in the Irish people. There is currently a sense within the country that anything is possible.

Presently Ireland is making a joint bid with Scotland to hold the 2008 European Soccer Championships and we believe that our bid will be successful.

Is it possible that this event will be the launching pad for greater and more ambitious projects?

Is it possible that we will witness the greatest sporting world event taking place in Ireland within the next twenty years? Is Ireland ready to bid for the Olympic Games and how will that event shape Ireland's future sports and tourism policies?

# 11.

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The Study Team Members:

David Maes  
John Ryan

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¥ The Great Southern Hotel Group

¥ Continental Airlines

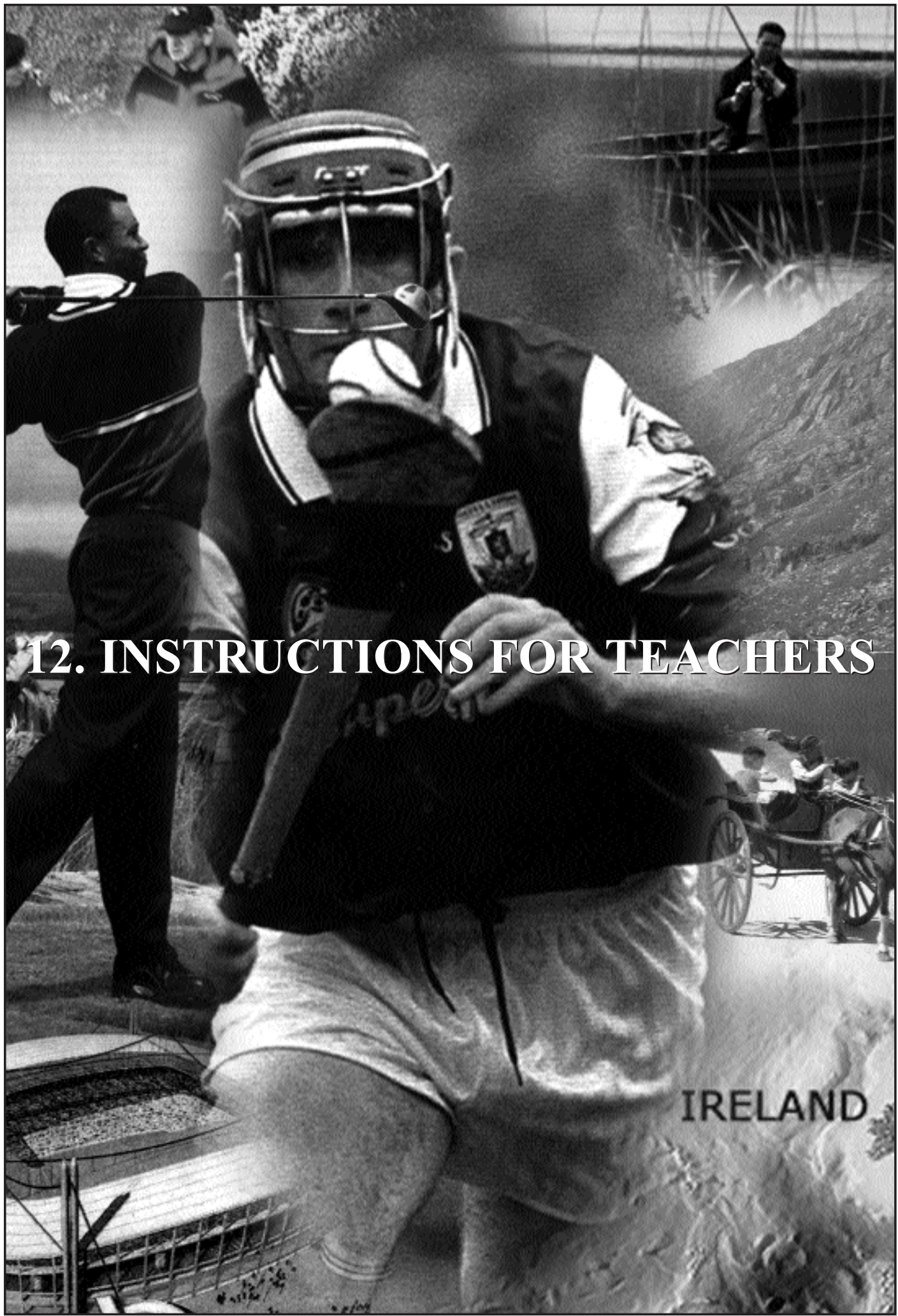
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# 12. INSTRUCTIONS FOR TEACHERS

IRELAND

# INTRODUCTION

One of the most appealing aspects of the T&T Programme internationally for both teachers and students has been the opportunity to work and engage with material, which is both relevant and current. Broad general content and concepts are more meaningful for students if seen in a practical context. It is fashionable today for young people to be interested in and deeply involved in sport. Placing sport within a tourism context should challenge and stimulate students in the required way. We hope that our case study " Sports Tourism — The Irish Experience" will help teachers and students to achieve this.

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF IRISH SPORTS TOURISM CASE STUDY

- To evaluate the importance of sports tourism in Ireland
- To highlight how sports tourism in Ireland is currently run and marketed
- To explore what may be possible in the future
- To provide material for the Global Travel and Tourism web page
- To provide students and teachers involved in the Global Travel and Tourism Programme with additional study material
- To facilitate transnational understanding and co-operation.

## METHODOLOGIES

It is envisaged that the main teaching components of this lesson should involve:

- Working with IT
- Reading and assimilating the material provided
- Comparing and contrasting the issues identified with issues from other Sports Tourism case studies presented on the web
- Class discussion and group work
- Role playing on controversial / conflict issues
- Assignment work.

## GLOSSARY

**Footy** —The colloquial name given to Australian Rules Football. It was developed by Irish emigrants to Australia in the 19th century.

**Gaelic Games** —Traditional games played in Ireland.

**G.A.A.** —The Gaelic Athletic Association is the body which administers Gaelic Games.

**Camoige** —The game of hurling played by women.

**Handball** —An international game, like squash but not played with a racket. The type of handball played in North America probably had its origins in Ireland. The Irish handball court is larger than the North American court.

**The Six Nations Rugby Championship** —The annual series of international rugby matches played by Ireland, England, Scotland, Wales, France and Italy.

**F.I.F.A.** —The world governing body of association football.

**Bord Fáilte** —The Irish tourist Board. It will be replaced in 2002 by a new body named Tourism Ireland which will market the whole island of Ireland.

**County Cork** —The largest county in Ireland located in the South west

**The Shannon** —The longest river in Ireland.

**The Erne** —A river located in the North West.

**The Liffey** —The river which flows through the capital city, Dublin.

**County Donegal** —The most north westerly county in Ireland.

**County Sligo** —A beautiful western coastal county which inspired the poetry of W.B. Yeats.

**County Kerry** —The most south westerly county in Ireland.

**The Spanish Armada** —The fleet of ships sent by King Philip of Spain to attack England in 1588.

**County Wicklow** —An eastern county

**Foot and Mouth** —A highly contagious disease of sheep, cattle, pigs and goats.

**Killarney** —A town of 12,000 located in the South West of Ireland. It has a well established tourism industry dating back to 1750.

**The Gulf Stream** - An ocean current which flows out of the Gulf of Mexico and which has a moderating influence on the climate of North West Europe.

**The Blackwater** —A river which flows mainly through Co.Cork.

**Lough Corrib** —A lake found in the mid west, mainly in Co. Galway.

**Delphi Lodge** —An internationally famous fishery in Co. Mayo.

**County Mayo** —A western coastal county.

**County Kildare** —A midland county bordering the capital city, Dublin.

**Blarney** —A well known tourism destination in Co. Cork. It is reputed that anybody who kisses the "Blarney Stone" will get the benefit of eloquence.

**Fermanagh** —A county found in the North West.

**Three Day Event** —An equestrian competition which tests a horse's and rider's ability over three different disciplines — dressage, cross country and show jumping.

**Point to Point Racing** - Horse racing over obstacles but not run under national hunt rules.

**Steeplechasing** - Horse races run round a course with brush fences or hurdles. Steeplechasing as a sport originated in Ireland.

**County Meath** —A midland county.

**Links Courses** — Golf courses built near the sea.

**Parkland Courses** — Golf courses built in tree - lined parkland.

**Portmarnock** —A championship course in Co. Dublin

**Royal Co. Down** —A championship course Co.Down in the North East of Ireland.

**Ballybunion & Waterville** - Two championship courses in Co. Kerry

**Arnold Palmer, Jack Nicklaus, Tom Watson, Mark O Meara and Tiger Woods** — Internationally renowned American professional golfers.

**Greg Norman** —Australian professional golfer.

**Ernie Ells** —South African professional golfer.

**Green Fees** —The fee a visiting golfer must pay to be allowed to play on a golf course.

**The Ryder Cup** —The international golf tournament played every two years between male teams from the USA and Europe. It was first played in 1927.

**The Curtis Cup** —The international amateur golf tournament played between female teams from the USA and Great Britain & Ireland.

**The Seve Trophy** —The International golf tournament played between male teams from Great Britain & Ireland and the Rest of Europe. It was inaugurated in 1999.

**Hydrotherapy** —The treatment of illnesses through the external use of water.

**Thalassotherapy** —A form of treatment to detoxify and relax the body involving the application of mud and seaweed compresses.

**Sean Kelly** —A famous Irish professional road racing cyclist who was ranked as number one in the world for six years during the eighties.

**Eamonn Coghlan** —World Championship 5000 meters athletics champion in 1979. Twice beaten into 4th position and denied a bronze medal in two successive Olympics.

**Sonia O Sullivan** — Ireland's most famous female athlete, second in the 5000 meters in the Sydney Olympics 2000.

**Eddie Macken** — Ireland's most famous show-jumper through the seventies and eighties.

**Eddie Jordan** — Owner of Jordan Grand Prix Motor Racing Team.

**The Celtic Tiger** —The name given to the phenomenal growth experienced in the Irish economy over the last decade.

**Tour de France** - The most prestigious cycling road race in the world.

**The Tall Ships Race** - A gathering of international sailing ships.

**Fireball & Laser Racing** - Categories of light sailing boat racing.

**PWA Irish Wave Grand Prix** - A prestigious surfing championship.

**Australasia** - Marketing term used in reference to Australia and Asia.

**Bocce** - A type of bowling specially devised for the Special Olympics.

**Croke Park** - The major Gaelic Games stadium in Ireland located in Dublin.

**P.G.A.** - The Professional Golfers Association.

**Aer Lingus** - The Irish national airline.

**Waterford Crystal** - A world brand name in the production of crystal.

**Velodrome** - A purpose built stadium for cycle racing.