



### TOP SKI DEALS

THE snow's already started falling in the French Alps so savvy skiers can make the most of quieter, unspoiled pistes and early bird deals.

A week at Residence La Daille with Pierre & Vacances, located at the entrance to the resort, in the La Daille district just 1km from the centre of Val d'Isère, is £337pp on November 27, in a studio for four people. See [pierre-et-vacances.co.uk](http://pierre-et-vacances.co.uk) or call 0870 0267 145. Visit [valdisere.com](http://valdisere.com)

SPEND Christmas at Norway's oldest ski resorts, Gello. Vestlia Resort is close to the slopes. Depart on December 20 for seven nights in a family room, from £759pp on half-board, based on two adults and two children, including flights and transfers. Book by October 9. See [skisafari.com](http://skisafari.com) or call 01273 224 068.

Ski Total has Chalet Les Arolles in Tignes, France, for £828pp travelling on the December 20 for a week. The price is based on two adults sharing and includes return flights from Edinburgh to Geneva, transfers, free WiFi and seven nights' chalet catered accommodation with complimentary wine. See [skital.com](http://skital.com) or call 01483 791933.

THERE are dozens of reasons for heading to France's Les 2 Alpes, including the fact it has the largest skiable glacier in Europe. Les 2 Alpes also has Freestyle Land — a whole sector of slopes (mainly in La Toura sector) dedicated to freestyle, arranged by ability level and discipline. There's the Easy Park for budding riders, Progress Park and the Family Park for a challenge and Park Avenue and the Park de l'Envers' ramps and urban-style modules for experienced snowpark users.

For little ones, there's even a snowpark area on Les Limgaons and a Kids' Park on Les Crêtes at 2,100 metres. Everything you could need to train (and perfect your tricks) all winter long. See [les2alpes.com](http://les2alpes.com)

**news** LONDON hotel La Suite West has been awarded Best Vegan Menu at the PETA UK Vegan Food Awards, for their afternoon tea, à la carte and five-course tasting menu at their stylish Raw restaurant, located on the edge of Hyde Park.

The recently-launched restaurant offers alcohol-free cocktails to a meat-free restaurant with a capacity of 50 seats. Head chef Nik Heartland has carefully designed the menu to provide some of the best that nature can offer, with options such as Mexican tortillas and tiramisu with almond biscotti.

La Suite West has rooms from £144 a night (excl VAT). See [lasuitewest.com](http://lasuitewest.com) or call 020 7378 2450.



### ISLE BE BACK

GET hints and tips on what to do in Arran from Natalie Mitchell, a ranger from the National Trust for Scotland on CalMac's MV Caedonian Isles ferry.

She will be on board on Fridays and Saturdays and can help you with info on Brodick Castle, Gardens and Country Park and more.

Natalie will be able to tell passengers what to look out for, point out wildlife and share tips about her favourite hot locations.

Caledonian MacBryne's special Go Days Out package offers include combined ferry and access to Brodick Castle, above, as well as other attractions on the island. See [calmac.co.uk/](http://calmac.co.uk/) daysout for information on how to book your day out. Available until October 25.

**news** FANCY taking on the Camino de Santiago next year? Then get in now and book and save ten per cent off with CaminoWays.com, the walking and cycling holiday specialists.

The early bird offer is for those who want to discover the spectacular scenery, delicious cuisine and fascinating history of the Camino in 2016.

Whether you want to walk or cycle, take on the famous French Way or a lesser known trail, the Camino is guaranteed to be an unforgettable journey, packed full of history and special moments. Email [info@caminoways.com](mailto:info@caminoways.com).

## RELAX AND ENJOY THE CRAIC ON



**"JUST aim for the middle of nowhere and add a little." Brenda wasn't kidding with her directions.**

Hidden somewhere in the lush countryside along the border, Mullan feels like Ireland's last outpost before literally stumbling over the border.

Once a thriving community that centred around a shoe factory, the village fell into decline due in no small part to the Troubles raging a mile down the road.

Now a quiet hamlet of abandoned red and white brick cottages, 'the Mill' feels like it's keeping one or two secrets.

One of the more loosely kept ones is Busy Bee Ceramics. Brenda's pottery workshop in the old factory canteen.

We found her in full flow with a young family at the potter's wheel when we first poked our heads around the door, but it's not long before got our own hands dirty.

I've spent a lot of time in Ireland seeing family and friends and I admit Monaghan isn't the first place I'd think of to visit.

But just you wait until you're bounding along those country roads, skirting around the county's famous Drumlins — small, dumping-like hills surrounded by wetlands and loughs — and passing through idyllic market towns.

It's obvious that Monaghan still has that loveable 'land that time forgot' charm that much of Ireland seems to be actively trying to lose. Packing up the car and setting off into uncharted territory was just the kind of Irish adventure I loved as a kid and one that I unashamedly enjoyed as an adult. What's more, a stay here is cheap as chips and one that the whole family will love.

After Kirsty had a go at 'throwing' a pot, it's was my turn as Brenda showed me how to manoeuvre my fingers to get the smooth wet clay centred and shaped. I was pretty proud of myself — and, it has to be said, strangely relaxed — when the wheel finally ground to a halt.

"That's a fine looking wee pot there," she says in her chatty northern drawl. Given how many people she sees through her door, I'll take the compliment.

We based ourselves in Clones, which is a short drive from everything worth seeing. We stayed in the centre of town at the cosy Creighton Hotel, a prime spot on the main drag with a fantastic value-for-money restaurant and locals' bar.

We were there during the week but all the pubs in town have lively trad sessions packing in the regulars at the weekends.

With connections to a saint, a Waterloo hero and boxing champion Barry McGuigan, Clones has more than its fair share of history and most of it is in full view, as we found out from local historian George Knight.

The proverbial font of knowledge, George passionately guided us through centuries of fascinating history as we walked the streets, with a stop at the Clones round tower being my personal highlight.

History isn't just to be found in Clones itself though. A short drive out of town and we were cruising up the gravel drive towards the grandly named Hilton Park.

We got a little giddy with visions of Mr Carson and Mrs Hughes to greet us as we pull up in our less-than-grand Volkswagen Passat but inevitable Downton Abbey comparisons aside, this striking house is a rarity in this part of the world.

Most of the landowners who settled here were turfed out and their country piles burned to the ground by the locals. Fred and Joanna Madden's 300-year ancestral home miraculously survived the onslaught.

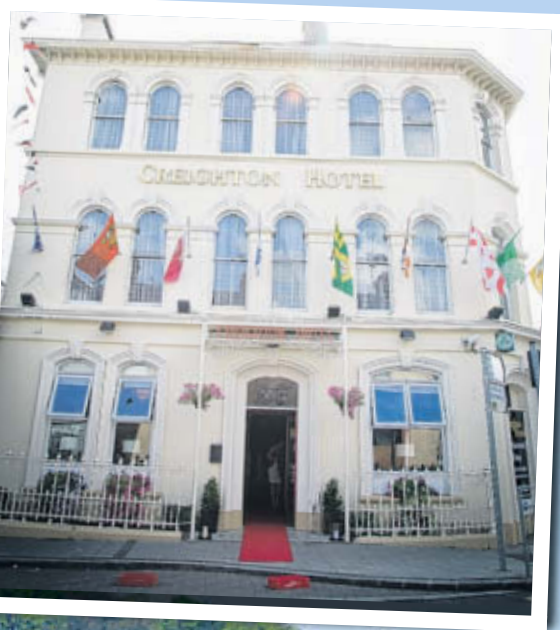
Now a six-bed guest house, the house,



# Emerald smile

PICTURESQUE... beautiful Irish countryside is well worth a visit

## HOLIDAY IN BEAUTIFUL IRELAND



### GO: MONAGHAN

Ryanair and Aer Lingus fly to Dublin from Glasgow and Edinburgh from £9.99 one way. See [ryanair.com](http://ryanair.com) and [aerlingus.com](http://aerlingus.com). EasyJet flies from Edinburgh and Glasgow to Belfast ([easyjet.com](http://easyjet.com)). Double rooms at the Creighton Hotel in Clones start from €50pn. Book at [creighton-hotel.ie](http://creighton-hotel.ie). More info at [monaghan-tourism.ie](http://monaghan-tourism.ie), [rallyschoolireland.ie](http://rallyschoolireland.ie), [brehonbrewhouse.com](http://brehonbrewhouse.com), [hiltonpark.ie](http://hiltonpark.ie) and [busybeeceramics.ie](http://busybeeceramics.ie).

with all its towering family portraits and four-poster beds, is surprisingly informal and feels lived in. The dynamic husband-and-wife duo are the definition of Irish hospitality, with Fred gaining a formidable reputation in the kitchen.

And if our lip-smacking lunch of salmon gravadlax and obligatory home-baked soda bread was anything to go by, it's more than well-deserved. What better excuse to spend the night?

With great fresh produce at local chef's finger tips, culinary hotspots like Hilton Park and Castle Leslie — where Sir Paul McCartney wed Heather Mills no less — are really helping the county make an

impact with its food. Monaghan is also leading the charge of Ireland's new generation of craft brewers.

Opened a year ago on a small working farm near Carrickmacross, the Brehon Brewhouse has fairly lofty ambitions as we found out from master brewer Phil.

While Guinness is still king, craft brewing has come into its own with the appetite for new beers becoming insatiable. You only need to look at how far Brehon Brewhouse has come in one short year to appreciate the trend.

After Phil explained the process from hops to tap and I tried my hand at labelling a bottle, it was time for my favourite bit.

The brewery has its own tasting bar set in the old farmstead where we sampled a tippie or two in surroundings which look like they haven't changed since the owner Seamus was a boy.

The superb Brehon Blonde and Killanny Red are the brewery's staple offering but the limited edition elderflower ale had me all but ready to run away with it.

Monaghan is perfect for lovers of the great outdoors with plenty of walking trails, kayaking, pony trekking, angling and yes, bog snorkelling (only in Septem-

ber). If you want to up the ante, the Rally School Ireland in Scotstown is not far from Monaghan town.

While Kirsty often picks on my questionable driving skills, I'd never tried anything this high-octane behind the wheel of a car before.

With my helmet on and strapped in so tightly that I felt part of my stripped out Ford Escort Mark II, I set out on the track with owner David.

By the end of the first lap I was hooked and terrified in equal measure. At the end of the session, I took the corners and drifted like a young Colin McRae. David obviously helped from the navigator's seat, expertly guiding me throughout over my headphones and massaged my ego something rotten.

With various packages available, including "dads and lads" days, and an impressive range of cars to try, it is surprisingly affordable to get your kicks. Say what you like about Monaghan, it's shifting up into top gear.



GETTING IN GEAR... David belts up while on holiday

**What costs what?**  
€20 for a day's kayaking on Lough Muckno (Muckno Adventures)

**Do** Treat yourself to a meal at one of Castle Leslie's three restaurants

**Don't** Forget to pack appropriate outdoor clothing

DAVID WALSH

## REACH FOR THE MOON

DESPERATE to do Disney but feel it can be just a little bit pricey with the whole family? Then why not give New Smyrna Beach, just over an hour's drive north from Orlando, a try.

Home to a 13-mile stretch of white sandy beaches overlooking the Atlantic Ocean, it is a perfect place to stay and enjoy all the area has to offer.

And a great place to based yourself and the family is The Moontide Condominium, a self-catering condo-hotel. This "home away from home" lets families sprawl out in spacious apartments after an adventure-packed day at nearby theme parks.

Orlando and all its theme parks are just an hour's drive away — meaning at New Smyrna Beach you get the best of both worlds — sun, sand and sea and all things Disney, Universal and SeaWorld.

Moontide has just launched a "5th Night Free" promotion, just in time for Christmas breaks to Florida where guests can stay four nights from now through to the New Year and the fifth night is free, meaning you can still enjoy all the thrills of Orlando without the sky high prices of Disney area hotels. There are 68 apart-

ments to choose from with one, two and three-bed beachfront options. Guests can also enjoy the on-site tennis court, games room, fitness room, a fifth storey swimming pool and sunning deck.

Every apartment boasts its own balcony and kitchen, so families can feast on fresh Floridian cuisine in the privacy of their own dining space. Moontide is located on New Smyrna's "no drive" section of the resort.

The stunning beach at the back of the property is great for catching some sun.

New Smyrna Beach is Florida's second oldest city and has a wealth of historical sites including sugar mill ruins in the area. History buffs will also like the city's Historical Museum and the Black Heritage Museum.

So just as the UK sunshine fades to make way for chilly autumn and winter days, take advantage of Florida's warmth.

Moontide has availability during October half term and Christmas. Rates start from £413 for six nights in a one-bedroom beachfront condo, or £529 for six nights in a two-bedroom beachfront condo in December. See [moontide-condos.com](http://moontide-condos.com), email [moontide@cfl.r.com](mailto:moontide@cfl.r.com) or call 1-800-421-8222 or 1-386-428-5691.



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