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Tourism Ireland welcomes exceptional +14% growth in overseas visitors for the first quarter of 2015

Positive start to the year as Tourism Ireland rolls out its promotional programme around the world, aiming to make 2015 best year ever for Irish tourism

2015 is off to a really positive start, with today's figures from the CSO (Central Statistics Office) indicating growth of +14% in overseas visitors to the Republic of Ireland for the first quarter of 2015. That means we have welcomed an additional 189,000 visitors over the same three-month period in 2014. This is good news indeed, with the increase in visitor numbers from overseas helping to boost employment and economic recovery around the country.

Niall Gibbons, CEO of Tourism Ireland, said: *"Today's figures represent a stunning start to the year. Our aim is to ensure that 2015 is the best year ever for Irish tourism and already we have seen an exceptional performance from Mainland Europe in the first quarter (+18%). It's another record first quarter for visitor numbers from North America and our longer-haul markets of Australia and New Zealand. I also welcome the strong increase in British visitors (+14%), our largest market for overseas tourism. Today's figures very much reflect the sentiment expressed by our tourism industry partners overseas, including tour operators and carriers, as well as tourism businesses here at home."*

- Overseas visitor numbers are up over +14% between January and March 2015 – 189,000 additional visitors.
- **Great Britain:** GB, our largest market, recorded growth of +14% in Q1 – 90,000 extra British visitors.
- **North America:** it's been a record first quarter for visitor numbers from the United States and Canada (+7%). Ireland now welcomes 10% of all American visitors to Europe – particularly noteworthy given the intense competition from other destinations.
- **Mainland Europe:** Q1 has seen an exceptional performance from Mainland Europe (almost +18% or 78,600 extra arrivals) – with markets like France (+26%), Italy (+36%), Benelux (+16%) and Spain (+28%) turning in stellar performances.
- **Australia and Developing Markets (ADM):** it's also been a record first quarter for arrivals from Australia and developing markets – up 9.4% to 88,300 arrivals (on a previous record Q1 in 2014).

Niall Gibbons continued: *"Our strategy of focusing investment in key markets is paying dividends. Our strong position in digital media is also helping to drive growth; Tourism Ireland is now the third largest tourism board in the world on Facebook, with almost 3 million fans, and the second largest on Twitter, with more than 270,000 followers."*

"Promoting the Wild Atlantic Way and the Causeway Coastal Route continues to be a major focus for Tourism Ireland around the world in 2015; we are also showcasing the new Dublin Discovery Trail. This year marks 150 years since the birth of world-renowned Irish poet and Nobel laureate, WB Yeats, and Tourism Ireland is promoting Yeats 2015 – particularly to our 'culturally curious' audience. This year has also been designated ID2015 (the year of Irish design), a showcase of the best of Irish design."

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