

SOAR

(Situation & Outlook Analysis Report) February 2024



The International Monetary Fund's (IMF) <u>World Economic Outlook January Update</u> projects global growth to be steady at +3.1% in 2024 and +3.2% in 2025. However, the forecast for 2024–25 is below the historical (2000–19) average of +3.8%. With a decrease in the rate of inflation and steady growth, the likelihood of a hard landing has receded and risks to global growth are broadly balanced, according to the IMF. On the upside, faster falls in inflation could lead to further easing of financial conditions. On the downside, new commodity price spikes from geopolitical shocks – including continued attacks in the Red Sea – and supply disruptions or more persistent underlying inflation could prolong tight monetary conditions.



There is a very positive outlook for direct air access to the island of Ireland for April 2024. Based on OAG filings, scheduled air capacity to the island of Ireland will be 106% of April 2023 levels, with 2.5 million seats filed for the month.

Air capacity from each of our four market areas is positive. GB (101%), Mainland Europe (108%), North America (111%) and Other Areas (121%) are all filed above April 2023 levels.



STR reports that hotel occupancy in Northern Ireland for 2023 was 74%, up +4% on 2022. In Ireland, occupancy was 78%, up +7% when compared to 2022.

The average daily rate (ADR) for a room in Northern Ireland in 2023 increased by +8% to £108 when compared to 2022. In Ireland, the average daily rate in 2023 was €170, up +7% when compared to 2022.



Tourism Ireland is rolling out an extensive and targeted programme of activity to inspire potential overseas visitors to travel to the island of Ireland in 2024 and beyond. Our message is that the island of Ireland has so much to offer across regions and seasons. We are showcasing iconic reasons to travel here, expanding people's bucket lists from best-known spots to our hidden gems. We are focusing on tourists with 'value adding tourism traits' i.e., those people who have funds to travel, who prize memorable experiences and tend to travel around regions and across seasons.



Following a strong 2023, international tourism is well on track to return to prepandemic levels in 2024, according to UN Tourism (formally known as the United Nations World Tourism Organization). Its latest World Tourism Barometer reports that international tourism ended 2023 at 88% of pre-pandemic levels, with an estimated 1.3 billion international arrivals. The release of remaining pent-up demand, increased air connectivity and a stronger recovery of Asian markets are expected to underpin a full recovery by the end of 2024, with initial estimates pointing to +2% growth above 2019 levels. This central forecast by UN Tourism remains subject to the evolution of existing economic and geopolitical downside risks.

Economic Conditions



2024 Forecast Economic Outlook trended by month

Source: Oxford Economics

Great Britain

Inflation is set to drop much more quickly than previously anticipated, due to falling oil and gas prices and weaker services inflation. This will boost real incomes and aid economic growth. Lower inflation should also mean the Bank of England can cut interest rates faster. Oxford Economics forecasts GDP growth of +0.6% in 2024.

Exchange rate Feb '23 £1: €1.13

Feb '24 £1: €1.17

US

The outlook continues to improve, aided by the strength of the labour market and lower inflation. According to Oxford Economics, there doesn't appear to be a significant risk that consumers will tighten their purse strings significantly. Consumer spending will be supported by strong job growth, solid growth in real disposable income and lower gas prices. Oxford Economics forecasts GDP growth of +2.3% in 2024.

Exchange rate

Feb '23 \$1: €0.93 Feb '24 \$1: €0.93 Feb '23 \$1: £0.82 Feb '24 \$1: £0.79

France

Last year, France showed substantial resilience and was the second-best performing major eurozone economy after Spain. But the economy is starting this year from a weaker position after a stagnant Q4. Business surveys are all in contractionary territory at the start of this year, supporting the view that any meaningful rebound in activity is still some way off. Oxford Economics expects GDP to slow down to +0.5% in 2024.

Exchange rate

Feb '23 €1: £0.89 Feb '24 €1: £0.85

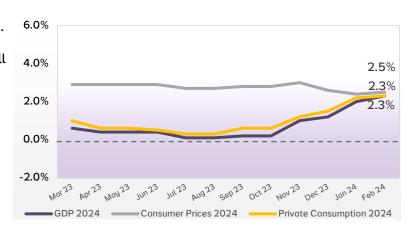
Germany

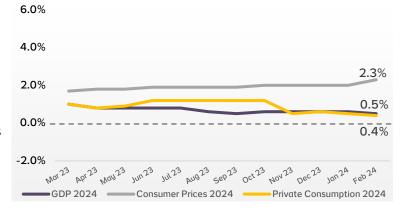
The outlook for the German economy remains downbeat. Oxford Economics believes that the economy will struggle to grow after contracting (-0.1%) last year, the worst outturn of any large, advanced economy in 2023. This provides a low starting position for 2024, with Oxford Economics of the view that the economy will struggle to gain momentum and it forecasts a further GDP contraction of -0.1% in 2024.

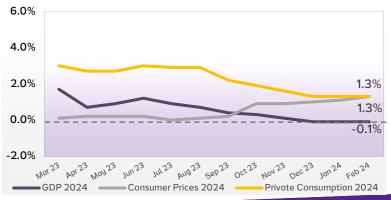
Exchange rate

Feb '23 €1: £0.89 Feb '24 €1: £0.85









Island of Ireland Access Situation



April 2024 Forecast Seat Capacity



There is a very positive outlook for direct air access capacity to the island of Ireland for April 2024, with 2.5 million seats planned. Based on OAG filings, air seat capacity to Ireland is forecast to be at 104% of April 2023 levels, with Northern Ireland scheduled at 114%.

Source: OAG FEB 1

Seat capacity to the island of Ireland for April 2024 is scheduled at 106% of the level it was in April 2023.

Air Access April 2024 forecast – % share of April 2023



GB = Great Britain ME = Mainland Europe NA = North America OA = Other Areas

OAG's forecast seat capacity from each of our four market areas is positive. GB (101%), Mainland Europe (108%), North America (111%) and Other Areas (121%) are all filed above April 2023 levels. Airlines are scheduled to operate 15,000 flights to the island of Ireland in April 2024.

Airports Forecast – April 2024

Belfast City Airport and Belfast International Airport are filed at 126% and 110% respectively of April 2023 levels. City of Derry Airport is filed at 121%. Dublin Airport and Cork Airport are scheduled to return to 106% and 97% respectively of the seat capacity levels experienced in April 2023. Shannon and Kerry are filed at the same level as April 2023. Ireland West Airport Knock is scheduled at 90% of April 2023 levels. International services to Donegal will begin later in the spring. Even with economic and geopolitical uncertainties, the demand for air travel continues around the world.

Airports	April 2023 seats	April 2024 seats	2024 % share of 2023
Belfast Intl.	330,564	364,080	110%
Belfast City	110,454	138,803	126%
City of Derry	7,889	9,576	121%
Dublin	1,634,524	1,725,490	106%
Cork	148,388	143,315	97%
Shannon	103,633	103,451	100%
Knock	51,033	45,940	90%
Kerry	19,089	19,156	100%
Total	2,405,574	2,549,811	106%

Ferry Performance – January 2024 vs January 2023

The latest performance data is for the first month of 2024 and shows ferry passengers on GB routes to and from the island of Ireland at 90% of January 2023 levels. Northern Ireland passenger traffic was 89% and Ireland was 90%. Note: performance data from France and Spain is not currently available.

Ferry Passenger Traffic	January 2024 % share of January 2023
Northern Ireland	89%
Ireland	90%
Island of Ireland	90%

Ferry (both ways)	January 2023	January 2024	2024 % share of 2023
GB – island of Ireland			
Sailings	1,492	1,288	86%
Passengers	215,810	193,357	90%
Cars	64,509	58,827	91%

2023 Performance



CSO Inbound Tourism

The Central Statistics Office now releases Inbound Tourism statistics, replacing the former Overseas Travel series and the Tourism and Travel series of the pre-COVID-19 era.

The Inbound Tourism series is compiled using a different sampling methodology and a different mode of data collection. The CSO has advised that the Inbound Tourism series should be seen as a completely new and different statistical series, rather than a continuation or update of the Overseas Travel series and the Tourism and Travel series.

Republic of Ireland Inbound Tourism

April – December 2023						
Market Area	Trips (000s)	Nights (000s)	Spend* (€m's)			
Great Britain	1,898	10,011	943			
North America	1,121	9,746	1,657			
Mainland Europe	1,804	17,210	1,638			
Other Areas	271	4,871	430			
Grand Total	5,095	41,838	4,667			

For the nine months from April to December, Ireland welcomed almost 5.1 million tourists, whose visits generated €4.7 billion in revenue.

These overseas tourists stayed almost 42 million nights in Ireland from April to December.

*Spend excludes fares

Source: CSO

Hotel accommodation

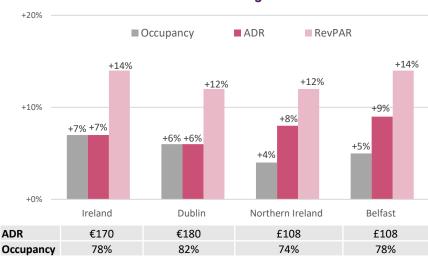
Performance data from STR reports that hotel occupancy for 2023 in Northern Ireland was 74%, up +4% on 2022. In Ireland, occupancy was 78%, up +7% compared to 2022.

The average daily rate (ADR) for a room in Northern Ireland in 2023 increased by +8% to £108 and in Belfast by +9% to £108, when compared to 2022.

In Ireland, the average daily rate in 2023 was €170, up +7% when compared to 2022. The average daily rate in Dublin in 2023 was €180, up +6% compared to 2022.

Note: STR data includes both overseas and island of Ireland residents.

Island of Ireland Hotel Performance Jan-Dec 2023 / Jan-Dec 2022 % change



Note: Data includes residents from the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

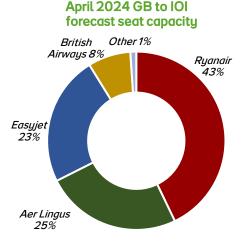
ADR = Average Daily Rate

Source: STR 2024

Great Britain



Access update



April 2024 total seats: 1.1m

News

- Ryanair will begin a new service from Birmingham to City of Derry Airport in April. The route has not been served since 2014.
- Aer Lingus has made the decision to cease its operations on the London Gatwick to Dublin route, from 31 March 2024.
- Stena Line have commenced a new freight service between Birkenhead (Liverpool) and Dublin, from mid-February 2024.

Market activity update

- Fill your heart with Ireland campaign: a kickstart campaign during the peak Christmas and New Year booking period ran on TV, Broadcast Video on Demand (BVOD) and in cinemas (around blockbuster releases), delivering more than 50 million opportunities to see.
- Always on digital activity: continues including paid social, paid search and organic social media, with a focus on off-season travel, regionality and St Brigid's Day.
- Co-operative (co-op) partnerships: campaigns are live in Q1 with British Airways, Ryanair, Loganair, easyJet and Stena Line, promoting ease of access from Great Britain to Northern Ireland. A partnership with Skyscanner is also live, to drive bookings on GB routes to Northern Ireland.
- Northern Ireland 'Embrace a Giant Spirit' campaign: a campaign will run in March on TV, Broadcast Video on Demand, outdoor and in cinemas and will also include a partnership with The Telegraph.
- St Brigid's Day: activity included a radio day with Siobhan McSweeney talking about all things St Brigid and springtime in Ireland (interviews on 11 radio stations reached 10.3 million); and four influencers travelled to Kildare to cover Brigid 1500 celebrations, with results to date including 34 different posts, reaching 593,000.
- Press trip coverage: includes Phoebe Smith's 'On the trail of a Celtic goddess' (*The Guardian*); Lucy Hunter's '48 Hours in Belfast' (*Bella*); 'Belfast Staycation' (*The Sun*); and The Leinster hotel in Dublin featured in 'Hottest new hotel openings in the UK and Ireland 2024' in *The Independent*.
- **Media visits:** upcoming press trips include 'Ireland's West Coast Wellness Weekend' for *Women's Weekly* magazine; 48 hours in Galway for *The Sunday Times*, Wild Atlantic Way for BBC *Countryfile*, and Fermanagh for *Mail on Sunday*.
- Celtic Connections: a B2B workshop took place in Glasgow in January, connecting 30 island of Ireland industry partners with 25 GB tour operators to drive future business.
- **GB trade co-op marketing:** campaigns are live with Caledonian Travel, Macs Adventures and Eclipse Breaks.
- The Coach Tourism Association Conference: Tourism Ireland and over 200 tour operators and suppliers attended the conference in Newcastle upon Tyne, which included content sessions, networking opportunities and a B2B workshop to drive future group tour programming.
- **C&IT Corporate Forum**: Tourism Ireland attended this B2B workshop and networking event in London and met with leading GB corporate end-users to promote the island of Ireland as a leading destination for corporate meetings.





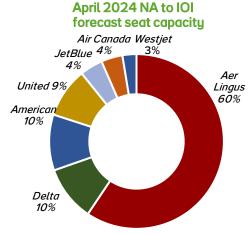




North America and Australia



Access update



April 2024 total seats 226,000

News

United States

 JetBlue, a new entrant to the market for Ireland, will launch services to Dublin from Boston and New York on 13th March.

Canada

 WestJet will commence a new service from Toronto to Dublin on 1st March, with seasonal services from Calgary and Halifax set to launch in Q2.

Australia

- Turkish Airlines (which operates an Istanbul to Dublin service) will begin services to Australia. The carrier will initially operate flights from Melbourne to Istanbul, with a stopover in Singapore, three times a week from 16th March.
- Emirates will return to Adelaide with non-stop daily flights to Dubai commencing on 28th October.

Market activity update

US

- Fill your heart with Ireland campaign: our six-week kickstart campaign generated 150 million impressions (opportunities to see) across digital, social and TV. Our spring campaign went live on 29th January (an integrated multi-channel campaign of TV, social, digital, audio and custom content) and is set to deliver 209 million opportunities to see.
- US Marketing Plans Launch: Tourism Ireland unveiled its 2024 marketing plans to 140+ key trade stakeholders and top media in New York. The event also included a panel discussion moderated by Travelzoo's senior editor Gabe Saglie, with Alice Mansergh, Ruth Andrews (ITOA and Chair Fáilte Ireland), Janice Gault (Northen Ireland Hotels Federation) and Alison Metcalfe.
- St. Brigid's Day: activity to celebrate St Brigid's Day took place across the US, including in Austin, New York and Phoenix, and included panel discussions and a performance by Jean Butler at the Irish Arts Center in New York.
- PGA Show Orlando: Tourism Ireland, together with 35 island of Ireland industry partners, attended the PGA Show; also supported a dedicated Ireland Golf Day. Tourism Ireland also organised a high-profile media event and panel, hosted by the Golf Channel and attended by 80 top golf journalists from outlets such as Golf Digest, Golf.com, and Sports Illustrated. Media interviews were conducted on the stand throughout the week, including with PGA Radio, Golf Channel and Fairways of Life.
- Media spotlight: coverage continues to emerge from the 2023 Travel Classics hosted at Ashford Castle. Hemispheres magazine (inflight magazine of United Airlines) included a 13-page spread in its February issue about the perfect three-day itinerary on the island of Ireland.
- USTOA Conference: Tourism Ireland organised a round-table insights meeting with key USTOA members in Los Angeles ahead of their conference. 45+ key account meetings were also conducted.
- ILTM Cannes: Tourism Ireland unveiled the new luxury travel proposition to travel trade 'Ireland, where luxury comes naturally'. 26 industry from the island of Ireland met with 1,800 luxury travel buyers and decision-makers (estimated 75% were US buyers).
- Luxury Showcase San Francisco: Tourism Ireland partnered with Crafted Ireland, Ashford Castle and Dromoland Castle to host an evening networking event with 30 San Francisco and Bau area-based travel trade members.
- **Midwest clinic:** Tourism Ireland conducted 20+ meetings with tour operators and college music directors who organise marching bands and choral groups travelling overseas.





North America and Australia



Market activity update

Canada

- Fill your heart with Ireland campaign: our 2024 campaign launched in February, with audio-visual content running on Broadcast Video On Demand (BVOD) and social media (Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest); it will deliver 37+ million opportunities to see. Digital display ads on Rome2Rio (travel planning tool) will strengthen intent among high-interest audiences; also, platform takeover on TheScore app, to drive awareness.
- Co-op activity: includes a campaign with WestJet on digital programmatic, Pinterest and Snapchat. The campaign will deliver 10 million opportunities to see and aims to drive sales for the new WestJet Toronto to Dublin service, promoting early season (March-May) departures, as well as supporting its Calgary and Halifax routes.
- Always-on digital activity: includes paid social seeding, paid search and social media, with
 content focusing on season extension, regionality and festivals such as St Brigid's Day,
 The Outing and St Patrick's Day.
- Media visits: Tourism Ireland hosted Celtic Life International (reach 200,000+) in January to support a seven-page cover story published in February highlighting 'Spiritual Ireland' and St Brigid's Day. Wander magazine (reach 150,000+) will visit at the end of February to cover the Wild Atlantic Way; and travel videographer and award-winning YouTuber Arienne Parzei (44,000+ followers) will arrive in April for a paid campaign focusing on Northern Ireland and Ireland's Ancient East.





Australia

- Fill your heart with Ireland campaign: the second phase of the digital advertising campaign is live in Australia from mid/late February, with an increased focus on AV content and the introduction of dynamic video display ads.
- Always on digital activities: including paid content seeding, paid search and social media
 are ongoing with content focusing on seasonal travel, regionality and winter festivals
 such as TradFest and St Brigid's Day.
- Partnership Programme: our partnership programme is set to launch again in 2024. Last year, the programme ran for six months; however, this year it will be 'always on' organic activity and with digital bursts in Q1/Q2 and Q4. Tourism Ireland plans to roll out the programme in late February/March.
- Trade co-ops: activity with key partners will kick off at the end of Q1, to push the shoulder season in Q3.
- TravelMedia's International Media Marketplace (IMM): Tourism Ireland will attend IMM with 200+ media set to attend; a programme of one-to-one appointments is scheduled.
- National Multicultural Festival: Tourism Ireland will attend the three-day festival in Canberra, in collaboration with the Embassy of Ireland, to highlight Irish culture, traditions and travel to the island of Ireland.



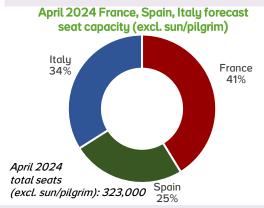




Southern Europe — France, Italy and Spain



Access update - Southern Europe



News

France:

 Aer Lingus Regional, operated by Emerald Airlines, will commence a new service from Rennes to Dublin this May. It has also been confirmed that its seasonal service from Brest to Dublin will resume in May. Aer Lingus will recommence its Paris to Shannon service in March.

Italy:

 Aer Lingus will operate a new service from Catania, Sicily, to Dublin from 1st May; and will add frequency on its Rome to Dublin service.

Spain:

 Ryanair is extending its Barcelona to Cork service until 2nd October; and easyJet's Barcelona to Belfast service will recommence in March.

Market activity update

France

- Fill your heart with Ireland campaign: our spring campaign went live on 1st February around the Six Nations France vs Ireland rugby match. The campaign includes digital outdoor ads in the Paris region and in key French cities with direct flights to the island of Ireland, ads on social, catch-up TV and segmented TV, creating an estimated 57 million opportunities to see.
- Media interviews: with local and national journalists in Marseille on the day of the match; messages included direct flights from Marseille and the Irish fans as ambassadors for the destination.
- Press conference: launch of the first edition of Ireland Week in France on 27th February.
- Partnership activity: with Havas Voyages, featuring an Ireland window campaign in 200 travel agencies, Ireland Week animation in travel agencies, as well as advertising on the streets of Paris with an Ireland branded coach and entertainment by Irish musicians and dancers.
- Carrier co-op: includes activity with Ryanair to promote direct flights from Paris to Belfast.
- Trade activity: Tourism Ireland and Aer Lingus ran a workshop in Lyon for 190 travel agents.
- Kuoni: Presentation on the island of Ireland to 30 travel agents in Normandy.

Italy

- Always-on digital activity: includes paid content seeding, paid search and social media focusing on off-season travel, regionality and winter festivals including TradFest and St Brigid.
- St Brigid's Day: activity included a content push to media and a consumer ezine with a shoulder season message, to highlight industry spring offers in Italy.
- **Joint webinar with VisitBritain:** promoted off-season travel, with a focus on spring breaks, to 150+ travel agents.
- Carrier co-op: includes a Ryanair campaign promoting the Milan to Belfast service to drive Q1 bookings to Northern Ireland. The campaign kicked off at the end of January and will run for two months, with digital display, DEM (dedicated email) and content on Ryanair.it.
- Northern Ireland 'Embrace a Giant Spirit': launched in mid-February in the Lombardy region to promote awareness for Northern Ireland via digital, video and digital outdoor ads.
- **Media event:** event at the end of February to launch our 3rd Ireland Week in Milan, supported by digital and digital outdoor ads and a social media campaign.

Spain

- Fill your heart with Ireland campaign: our spring campaign will go live in March on digital channels and will run for eight weeks. A Northern Ireland 'Embrace a Giant Spirit' campaign will also be live in Barcelona, with digital outdoor ads and audio highlighting direct access. This will be supported by access and market trade co-operative campaigns.
- **TV familiarisation trip:** Aquí La Tierra programme on TVE visited in February, filming 'Farm to Fork' experiences and landcapes in Ireland's Ancient East; this will be aired later in the spring.
- Semana de Irlanda: a week-long programme of events will run on 11th-17th March in celebration of St Patrick's Day, Irish traditions and culture. Events will highlight our music, gastronomy, literature, film and history; a publicity stunt with Carlos Núñez at the press launch will attract broadcast media.









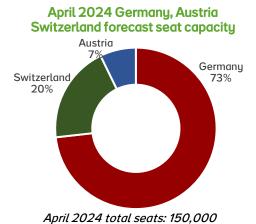




Central Europe - Germany, Austria and Switzerland



Access update



News

Germany:

 Lufthansa will increase frequency on its Frankfurt to Belfast service from March.

Austria and Switzerland:

 The Edelweiss seasonal service from Zurich to Cork will resume in April.

Market activity update

Germany

- Fill your heart with Ireland campaign: our campaign was live across TV, Connected TV and digital, including social media, from mid-January until mid-February. Our kickstart campaign ran until the beginning of January 2024, delivering 25 million impressions on digital and social channels.
- St Brigid's Day: activity included digital and online advertorials in well-known women's magazines.
- **CMT Stuttgart:** trade partners and industry from the island of Ireland attended CMT, Germany's largest consumer fair in Stuttgart, over nine days in January.
- Northern Ireland Embrace a Giant Spirit: a new campaign is live, promoting Northern Ireland and highlighting ease of access on direct Lufthansa flights from Frankfurt to Belfast. A digital co-op campaign with Lufthansa is also live to promote the service.
- "Best Luxury Newcomer Destination" 2023 Award: Connoisseur Circle a leading travel magazine amongst luxury consumers in Central Europe named the island of Ireland "Best Luxury Newcomer Destination" at its 2023 awards.
- Zeitgeist Irland 24: This is an initiative of Culture Ireland and the Embassy of Ireland in Germany to promote contemporary Irish arts and culture in Germany throughout 2024. Tourism Ireland in Germany will promote some of the events and the Zeitgeist Irland 24 website.

Austria and Switzerland

- Fill your heart with Ireland campaign: an advertorial style approach is planned for the main Fill your heart with Ireland campaign, which will kick off after St Patrick's Day and Ireland Week.
- St Brigid's Day: event in Martigny attracted over 130 attendees.
- Ireland Week: schedule for Ireland Week in both markets is currently being finalised.
- Consumer and tour operator activity: Tourism Ireland attended the leading Zurich
 Consumer Travel Fair (FESPO) and the Golf Fair offshoot, in partnership with local
 tour operators; we also held a client evening with French-speaking regional tour
 operators in Lausanne.







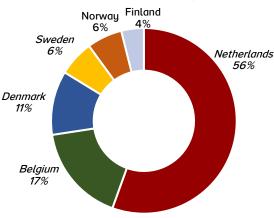


Northern Europe – Netherlands, Belgium and the Nordics



Access update





April 2024 total seats: 153,000

News

Netherlands and Belgium:

 Ryanair has announced a new service from Brussels Charleroi to Cork. The service will commence with two flights per week starting from 31st March; and from June onwards the flight schedule will increase to three times per week.

Nordics:

• Finnair will increase frequency from 8 to 10 weekly flights on its Helsinki to Dublin service, from April.

Market activity update

Netherlands and Belgium

- Fill your heart with Ireland campaign: was live in the Netherlands and Belgium from mid-January until mid-February. It ran on digital channels, as well as on YouTube, Facebook and Instagram, delivering 9.5 million impressions (opportunities to see).
- Northern Ireland 'Embrace a Giant Spirit': the campaign is live in the Netherlands,
 highlighting direct flights from Amsterdam to Belfast with KLM and easyJet
 via advertising on digital channels and on YouTube and paid social (including
 Instagram), as well as via online advertorials. The campaign will deliver 33.5 million
 opportunities to see.
- Partnerships: includes activity with Expedia and a leading Dutch tour operator.
- **Dutch TV:** an episode of *Rail Away* a Dutch TV series about remarkable railways around the world highlighted the Cobh-Mallow-Killarney rail route in January. It aired twice and was seen by over 900,000 viewers.
- Media partnership: with ANWB Reizen got under way in January. Activity included an
 advertorial in the January edition of its members' magazine, Kampioen (around 1
 million copies), as well as advertising on Facebook.

Nordics

- Fill your heart with Ireland brand ambassadors: Agneta Sjödin and Maja Kristina Strömstedt took part in a media trip to Dublin, with their content reaching 700,000.
- Ireland's Wild Islands TV series: a preview screening and Q&A session in Stockholm with presenter Eoin Warner and Swedish personality Agneta Sjodin attracted 50 key media and trade partners.
- · Always-on digital activity: continues and includes paid search, social media and email.
- Nordic travel trade events: Tourism Ireland attended a number of key Nordic travel trade events including Travel News Market in Copenhagen, Travel Match in Oslo and Matka in Helsinki (the largest travel fair in the Nordics).
- **St Brigid's Day:** an advertorial in the travel supplement of a national newspaper in Sweden, *Dagens Nyheters*, delivered 518,000 opportunities to see.
- Co-op: activity is live with two Nordic coach operators Albatros Travel (pan-Nordic) and Rolf's Buss (Sweden) and with Swedish golf operator HereWeGo.







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This report has been produced with available data up until 19 February 2024. Every effort has been made to ensure all data is accurate; however, Tourism Ireland does not take responsibility for any errors or omissions. If quoting from SOAR, please reference both Tourism Ireland and the original source of the information.