

## CHECK-IN

Jo Linehan &amp; Joan Scales

## SEASIDE SOJOURNS

■ **Lobster trawl in Connemara:** Join John the skipper at Roundstone pier and go on a three-hour boat journey (*below*). Visit the deserted island of Inishlacken, fish for mackerel and pull up some lobster pots before returning to Ballynahinch Castle for the night with fresh supper, from €255 per person; [ballynahinch-castle.com](http://ballynahinch-castle.com)

■ **Whale watch in Iceland:** Iceland is one of the best places in the world to witness a whole range of whales. From May until September is the best time to go. Flights at [wowair.com](http://wowair.com), tours from €69 at [elding.is](http://elding.is)

■ **Surf in Hawaii:** Hawaii's endless rolling waves and tropical beaches make it the best place in the world to catch the surf. See [gohawaii.com](http://gohawaii.com) for details.



## NEWS

**Global Vision**

The annual National Geographic Photographer of the Year awards is officially closed while judges make the difficult task of selecting a 2016 winner (to be announced in July). Until then, peruse the awe-inspiring imagery of the world's most remote and celebration destinations at [ravel.nationalgeographic.com](http://ravel.nationalgeographic.com).

**Belfast's Best**

Belfast's boutique hotel The Merchant (*above*) is raising a toast this week, as their barman Andrew Dickey

has been crowned World Class Irish Bartender of the Year 2016. Dickey's cocktails came out on top in the prestigious mixology competition against six finalists. He will go on to represent Ireland in the World Class Global Final 2016 in Miami in September. Taste what all the fuss is about at [themerchanthotel.com](http://themerchanthotel.com).

**Air Time**

Good news for New York lovers: Delta Air Line, which celebrates its 30th anniversary of service to Shannon this year, has reopened its non-stop service from to JFK this summer. Late evening flights plus on-board wifi have us planning a midsummer Big Apple escape, [delta.com](http://delta.com).

## DEALS

**HUNGARY:** Budapest, explore the city that straddles the Danube, three nights in four-star Mediterran Hotel, from €259pps with flights, [clickandgo.com](http://clickandgo.com), (01)-539 7777.

**PORTUGAL:** Madeira, stay in the famous Reid's Palace in October, a week with flights and private transfers, from €1,449pps, [platinumtravel.ie](http://platinumtravel.ie), (01)-853 5000.

**US:** Discover the west in a 14-day coach tour visiting national parks Grand Canyon, Yosemite, Bryce Canyon, Los Angeles, San Francisco and more from €1,999pps, [americansky.ie](http://americansky.ie), (01)-664 9979.



## A CRISP BREAK

Combining a trip to a castle with a stop off at a theme park, a relaxing overnight stay within a stone's throw of the city, and all reached by bus? Yes, you've heard correctly. We recently discovered you don't need a car to escape from the hustle and bustle of city life. Dunboyne Castle Hotel and Spa and Tayto Park have teamed up this summer to offer relaxing breaks tinged with a crunch of excitement.

But when we found ourselves without a car, we hopped on the number 70 in the city centre, which brought us through the historic Meath countryside to within walking distance of the hotel (and for just €3.30). Of course, you can always make it to Dunboyne village via Irish Rail, or a quick drive out on the Navan Road.

Tayto Park packages give you the chance to spend the night at Dunboyne Castle Hotel – a luxurious four-star hotel that is also a great base from which to explore the nearby sites of Trim Castle, the Hill of Tara or Newgrange and the Brú na Bóinne Unesco world heritage site.

The family package, starting from €219, includes B&B for two adults and up to two children under 12 and entrance into Tayto Park for the family. For couples, another package includes access to the hotel's Seoid Spa and Thermal Suite with its hydrotherapy pool and entrance to Tayto Park. An overnight stay for two adults with park tickets starts from €148 per couple.

We loved the Cú Chulainn Coaster, Europe's largest wooden rollercoaster, plus there are zip lines, a small zoo and a 5D cinema too. And you'll probably find a few bags of Tayto along the way too.

Eamon Donoghue

## GET APP-Y

**Citymapper:** This app covers 30 cities and combines Citi-bike routes, rail, tram, taxi and every other mode of transport to help you reach your destination. Download it at the app store, [citymapper.com](http://citymapper.com).



## TRAVEL GEAR

**1. Thermarest ridge rest solar**

There was a time when the avid sun-worshiper looking for an all-over tan might lay out on a sheet of tin foil to maximise the frying. Thermarest uses the principle to a more beneficial end, with an aluminised, shiny surface on its ridge rest solar mattress. The theory is that the coating bounces heat back, with its soft ridged surface trapping the warmth for a snuggly snooze. Some 2cm thick, the mattress's metalised surface also adds a layer of durability, while keeping it packably lightweight.

€41 from [greatoutdoors.ie](http://greatoutdoors.ie)**2. Trunki Yondi travel pillow**

From the guys who revolutionised kids' journeys through airports with their ride-on wheelie Trunki luggage comes its Yondi travel pillow. Designed for the younger traveller, it wraps round and uses magnets to connect securely under the chin. Super-soft, there are 16 designs and colours to fit into any fantasy world. Other well thought out features include a "Trunki grip" where you can attach their essential comfort blanket. Suitable for ages two and up – but not all the way up – the microbeads filling makes for comfy support. €19 from [littlewoodsireland.ie](http://littlewoodsireland.ie)

**3. Zyliss hot mug cafetière**

Swiss-brand Zyliss started as a maker of garlic presses back in 1948. This is the latest addition to its homewares roster. Combining an insulating double-walled mug with a cafetière plunger, it means you can bring a fresh-brewed coffee with you on the move. It's simple: add your favourite ground coffee, fill with hot water and press down the integrated fine-mesh plunger. Clip on the lid and you've java to go. Available in red, blue or black. €10 from [iwantoneofthose.com](http://iwantoneofthose.com)

Tom Kelly @tomtomkelly