



IRISH GAZETTE



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Exploring Northern Ireland

Northern Adventures

By Kathy McGorray Dougherty

Interested in an adventure vacation? How about one that involves scuba diving by shipwrecks or surfing near a white sand beach? Given the temperatures this time of year in the Midwest, you're probably picturing yourself enjoying these adventures in the Caribbean or Hawaii. Well, think again!

Northern Ireland offers outdoor adventures of every type – from easy, family-oriented hikes in the Sperrin Mountains to shooting the rapids on the River Bann. Don't worry if you're trying something for the first time; there are plenty of friendly, well-qualified instructors to help you learn.

The coastal waters near Northern Ireland offer excellent scuba-diving opportunities. The combination of 40 shipwrecks, offshore reefs, amazing drop-offs and clear water is hard to beat. Okay, the water is a bit cold, but proper equipment can take care of that. According to Aquaholics, a dive school located in Portstewart (with, arguably, the best name ever for a scuba diving business), the only thing you'll need to get started is "a sense of adventure."



Maybe you'd like to try a different way of getting wet. Surfing on the north coast of Ireland is a booming sport! Consistent waves and hidden beaches explain why. Surfing has even been utilized as part of the peace and reconciliation process in the North, with local groups sponsoring surf days to bring kids from differing backgrounds together. Everyone looks the same in a wetsuit!

Not interested in water sports? Then a different type of diving might be what you're looking for. The Wild Geese Sky Diving Centre, located about 15 miles south of Coleraine in Garvagh, offers an exhilarating way to see the Emerald Isle – from about



3,200 feet up! Wild Geese offers training for both solo and tandem jumps. They even sell gift certificates, so you can give the gift of sheer terror, oops - I mean excitement, to someone you love.

So, once again, it can be said that Northern Ireland has something for everyone, especially when it comes to outdoor adventures.

Kathy McGorray Dougherty is owner of Northern Ireland Travels, which specializes in creating personalized, self-guided trips to Northern Ireland. For more information, visit their website at www.nirelandtravels.com.