

A rare auld time! Dublin hits top 50 'most visited'

IT seems the rocky road to Dublin has morphed into something of a tourism superhighway, according to latest data.

The city now ranks ahead of such cosmopolitan metropolises as Sydney, San Francisco and Rio de Janeiro for traveller numbers, making it one of the world's top 50 most-visited cities.

The data, released by Euromonitor International, ranks Dublin at 43, just ahead of Florence at No. 44 and behind Malaysia's Johor Bahru in 42nd place.

The marketing giant revealed that just under 5million travellers (4.8million) arrived in Dublin this year, but that number is predicted to shoot up to over 5.3 million by 2020 and just over 6million by 2025. Hong Kong is the world's most-visited metropolis

By **Lynne Kelleher**

with more than 25million arrivals, while Bangkok is in second position with over 23million travellers, while London exceeded 19million. The iconic cities of Paris and New York are in seventh and eighth place.

There were more than 14million arrivals to the French capital this year, which is slightly down on the year before, while over 13million headed to the Big Apple, which is up on the 2016 arrivals.

But the Euromonitor report warns that London's business crown is under siege with Brexit looming - with Dublin named as one of its potential pretenders.

The report said: 'Competing cities that have emerged to steal its crown include Paris, Frankfurt,

Berlin, Stockholm, Dublin and Amsterdam, based on transport connections, diversity and creative spirit.'

While the report reveals that Silicon Valley is still the uncontested start-up capital of the world, it includes the Irish capital as a major player in Europe.

It also reveals that despite recent terror attacks in Europe, London, Paris and Rome are still the three most-visited European cities. The Top 100 City Destinations Ranking report also reveals that cities are a major part of global tourism.

'With urbanisation continuing... cities are becoming larger pull factors, with more people visiting cities for business and to visit friends and families,' it said.

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Dr Mark Dooley



MORAL MATTERS

Nothing more pure than the love between old and young

WHAT is more beautiful than the love between old and young? Innocence at both ends of the spectrum. Purity of heart without the pollution of stress or strain.

In the loving arms of the elderly, our children feel secure from the snares of life. They experience the apex of human affection, an ocean of tenderness in which they swim for joy. The alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end, joined together in blissful tranquillity.

Our boys are especially attached to their grandparents. And aren't they lucky to have them! Aren't they lucky to have that font of love which lavishes them with gentle care!

At this time of year, as the home fires burn bright, we focus on the past and the future. We cherish the old for having laid the foundations of our lives. We cherish them for the sacrifices, their wisdom, the strength amid our weakness.

But this is also the time of youth, a time when we give thanks for our little ones. Through our tears, we watch them make merry in joyful wonder. It is their season to shine, their season to soar.

The old understand the young. Having travelled down the decades, grandparents know what life has in store. They know that once innocence goes, it is gone for good.

And so, when they look upon their grandchildren, they see life at its very best. They see that source of gentleness uncorrupted by cynicism and care. They see it, they love it, and are moved by it.

I sat listening to our son chat on the phone with his grandmother. 'I hope I'll see you soon,' he said with a voice full of emotion. It took all my strength to hold back the tears.

In that precious moment, the difference in years simply disappeared. Two hearts were beating as one. Love had transcended all distinctions in space and time.

Children lift the burden of the years from the elderly. The elderly wrap the young in a mantle of love that banishes their fears. They give to each other without condition or cost.

How might life be if all relation-

ships were like this? The light that shines from the eyes of a grandparent in the presence of a child - that is what we call love. Look for it elsewhere and you will be hard pushed.

But in that moment, when the two ends of life ignite and fuse, we see our true nature. We see the way we were meant to be, and how we could be in spite of all our agonies. We see the miracle of love that gives life to young and old alike.

It is a beautiful thing to see the generations find meaning in each other. 'I hope I'll see you soon', and a dam of emotion breaks on both sides. Simple words that offer healing, help and hope.

I have often written that the moral measure of any society is how it treats its old and its young. But, perhaps, it may be truer to say that when we learn to care for one another like grandchildren and grandparents then we will have reached moral perfection. For then, we will have seen the beauty of love and chosen to live in its light.

So, as we live out these precious days before the year fades, savour the old and the young.

Watch them as they make light of the years, as they relish that one blessed moment together. Watch as they reignite the sacred innocence which is the secret to lasting joy.

AND then, as the new sun rises on 2018, may you share in that joy. Drop your defences, be like a little child and let no darkness eclipse your light. Be as gentle as a grandparent doting on their loved ones, for that is the way to the sanctuary of the soul.

If children are the heirs to the kingdom of Heaven, it is because they live as all human beings should. Watch them and you will get a lesson in life. Watch them as they trust that, when trouble comes, there is always someone there to take it away.

That someone might be you - a grandparent who has rediscovered the beauty of life through those who owe you their existence. If so, you will know that we are all bound together by needs that far surpass those of the fleeting moment.

Needs best expressed in those saving words: 'I hope I'll see you soon.'

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