

MAYO BREAK THAT'S SIMPLY THE WEST



Welcome.. the impressive grand design that greets you when you arrive at the Knockranny House Hotel



Colourful... enjoy a leisurely stroll in the town during your holiday in Westport

Classy yet relaxed would be a simple way to describe this hotel.

Indeed the same description could also be used to describe the hotel's restaurant La Fougere.

For those of us not used to eateries with French-sounding names, Knockranny's main dining body shouldn't put people off.

As well as a huge wine list and various unusual dishes, the menu also boasts an array of everyday delights.

On the night we dined there, I chose beef and my better half had

halibut and both were simply superb.

The waiting staff, like all the staff at this hotel, are courteous, helpful and genuinely friendly.

After dinner we retired to the hotel's lounge which again offers open fires and welcoming sofas and armchairs.

Knockranny has also kept up with the demands of its guests by building one of the most spectacular spas.

Lying back in the vitality pool at Spa Salveo, it was difficult to even imagine having to return to work.....ever.

If this is the lifestyle millionaires

lead on a daily basis then I'm upping my lotto lineage.

As well as the vitality pool Spa Salveo also offers a wide range of facilities including a serail mud chamber and dry flotation.

The better half, who has read more magazines about spas than the people who write them, assured me Spa Salveo would not disappoint.

Like the rest of the hotel industry in Ireland, Knockranny is battling to stay busy especially during the normally quiet winter months.

And yet I couldn't help notice that the hotel was far from quiet during the two days we spent there.

The main reason is that the hotel has knocked down its rates and the result has been a hotel that is busier than normal this time of year.

"Like a lot of other hotels we appreciate that people are being hit in their pocket so we have responded to that. Knockranny is affordable and we are as busy as ever because of that" revealed a senior staff member.

Needless to say there were almost tears when we finally had to check

out and return to the real world.

Indeed but for the fact that a very understanding sister-in-law was baby-sitting our three children, we would have booked in for another night.

Before we left Westport for good we decided to drive around the town one last time and day-dream about what it would like to be live here.

We said our goodbyes to Matt Molloys, The Porter House and Cosy Joe's where pints were sampled and highly recommended, all in the line of duty and a thorough review.

We were even tempted to stop at an estate agent's office and check what they had on offer - just in case that lotto ticket did ever come up trumps.

But the thought of Knockranny House, the log fires, the afternoon tea, Spa Salveo and the breath-taking views of snow-capped Croagh Patrick from our window was something not even winning the lotto could buy.

You can have too much of a good thing but we'll be back.

To find out more about Knockranny House Hotel and its rates check their website on www.khh.ie

IRELAND TRAVEL UPDATE

By JIM CLARKE

BMI had more bad news for Dublin Airport this week, which is still eeling from the chaos caused by the recent winter freeze.

The British low-cost airline is set to reduce its Dublin to Heathrow service to four flights daily from the end of March, putting 33 cabin crew jobs in Dublin at risk.

"The removal of the aircraft based at Dublin will regrettably also mean the closure of the cabin crew base at Dublin, resulting in 33 cabin crew positions being at risk of redundancy," the airline admitted.

The latest cuts are part of a 'restructuring' of the airline by its German owners Lufthansa, which involves axing 600 jobs and all loss-making routes.

But it's not all doom and gloom. We may be in a time of rising prices and route reductions, so it is good to hear of airlines adding services and slashing prices.

Air France is set to commence services to the Gulf from Paris from May, and has designed the timetable to dovetail with connections from Ireland and Britain.

Fares from Dublin to Abu Dhabi will start from €676 return including all taxes. But it might turn out to be cheaper again to book via Britain, as sterling fares from there begin from £366 return.



ABBEY Travel has a welcome sale on flights Down Under running until the end of the month.

They are promoting Qantas sale fares to a range of Australian and New Zealand cities until February 2. Flights will route via Frankfurt and Singapore, for travel between April 16 and June 20.

Our Spring is Autumn in the Southern Hemisphere, but since even their Winter is generally more pleasant than our Summer, it's still a great time to travel across the equator.

Perth is available from €725, with other Aussie cities, including Sydney and Melbourne, starting from €784.

Return fares to Auckland, Christchurch and Wellington in New Zealand begin from €815.

CLOSER to home, Panorama Holidays also have a sale on at the moment. The tour operator has discounted many fares on its Summer sun holidays, with vacations from €299 per person, saving up to €135 per person on 4 and 5 star hotels.

The firm is also offering 2 weeks for the price of one in selected properties, and is offering further deals for early bookers, such as free child places, free grandparent places, free teenager places, tiny tot offers and single parent family deals.

The cheapest fares are available on May departures to Majorca, Salou or Ibiza, starting from €299 per person for a seven-night stay.

Turkish holidays in ever-popular Kusadasi in September are available from €399 per person, with a week in Gran Canaria from €359.