



Tony Lane

Discover New England – Market Update

Ireland

1. Would you consider the geo-political-economic condition of your market to be stable (eg. inflation, gdp, health of mid-upper class, relations with USA, consumer confidence)?

Please briefly explain:

The Irish economy continues to perform well with GDP growth forecast by the European Commission at 0.2% in 2026 and 2.9% in 2027. Ireland is an affluent country and has one of the highest GDP per capita in the world. International travel is a priority spend.

Inflation is currently at 2.7% but this may come under pressure due to the increased energy costs resulting from the war in Iran. The European Central Bank is likely to increase interest rates in the coming months to dampen inflationary pressures.

Visitation from Ireland to the USA held up well in 2025. Visitation figures for 2025 were flat on 2024, which was a strong year. To date, the political situation has not impacted on Irish visitation to the USA. Feedback from the trade is that forward sales for USA products remains strong for 2026 and 2027.

2. What is trending for long-haul travel interests (eg. sports/events, readaways/hospitality, adventure, nostalgia, luxury, budget, astrotourism/nature-based, solo, etc)

1. Top interest: Experiential with relaxation
2. Interest: Multigenerational travel
3. Interest Solo travel

Comment:

Experiential travel is a rising trend, but not at the expense of comfort. Consumers want food, culture, wellness, road trips, nature, or guided discovery, but they also want beach time, spas, or ease. This is in contrast to hardcore adventure only. There is also an increased trend toward multigenerational travel with extended family groups. This is manifested by increased demand for suitable destinations and accommodations. Solo travel has also become very much mainstream, especially with availability of supporting packages.

3. Major industry news/announcements since last Summit (eg major travel company changes and/or flights to Boston/New York gateways):

Comment:

Aer Lingus, the national carrier of Ireland, has increased capacity on both the Dublin - Boston and Shannon to Boston services. DUB-BOS is now a triple daily on a widebody A330 during peak season, while SNN-BOS is going to 10 times per week during peak season on an A321 neo. This further enhances the excellent level of airlift Ireland has to New England.

4. Rank top three concerns affecting future travel to New England (eg. Sentiment towards USA, sentiment towards New England, fuel prices impacting cost of travel, competition, affordability of destination, airline availability, availability of product, esta/visa process, source market political environment, source market economics/politics stability, trends, etc.):

I've only got two main concerns...

1. Top Concern: Expected increased cost of airfare
2. Concern: Impact of global conflicts on the Irish economy and knock-on impact of travel market

Comment:

The number one concern is that the ongoing war in the Middle East will increase aviation fuel costs, which will be passed on to consumers, making vacations to New England more expensive. There is also concern regarding the impact of the global conflicts on the Irish economy and the knock-on impact of the travel market. However, the ongoing conflict in the East and the associated impacts on travel to Asia, may encourage consumers to travel West to the USA in 2026.

5. What advice to you have for New England's tourism suppliers to succeed in your market over the next two years (hotels, attractions, dmos, transportation, etc)?

Advice:

For DMOs, staying as engaged and active as possible in the Irish market is more important than ever, especially on the PR front. There has been a lot of negative media attention for the USA, but it

is important to counter this by continuing to showcase all that's good about New England. Coverage in the national media illustrates the incredible experiences visitors can have in New England and works to dispel negativity. Media FAMs should be supported to the max and budget allocated to support.

For accommodation suppliers, a greater presence on the inbound travel company platforms and bed banks would facilitate ease of booking for the Irish trade. So many beautiful New England properties are simply off the radar for the Irish trade.

For attractions, developing the digital maturity of your offering is key. Products need to be visible and bookable online.