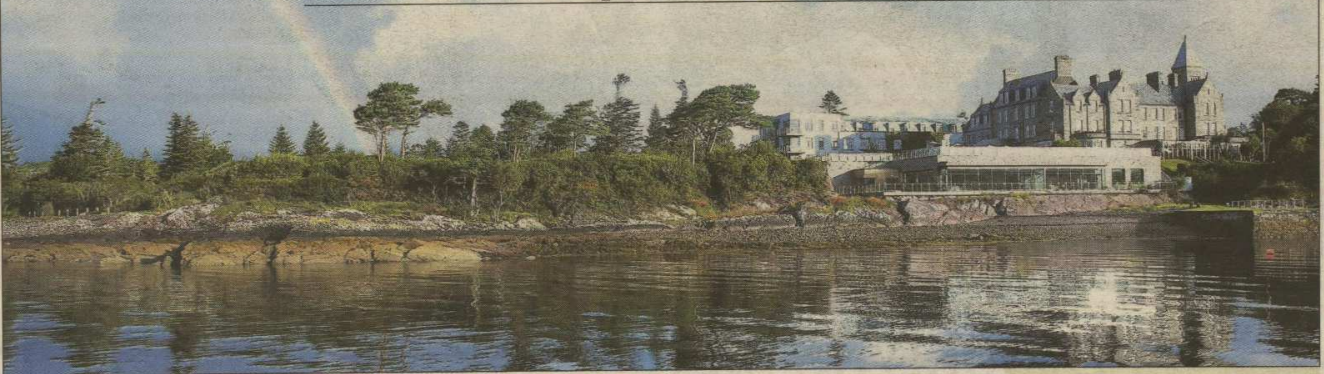




OVER THE RAINBOW

While many hotels declare themselves family friendly, it's not always the case. Here are four of the best places to visit in Ireland where the yellow brick road rises to meet both parents and children. By Claire O'Mahony



DELPHI MOUNTAIN RESORT LEENANE, CONNEMARA, CO GALWAY

'How deep is it?' we asked Donald, the Delphi Mountain Resort instructor, as we tentatively kayaked around the epic wateriness that is Killary Fjord. "As deep as the mountains are high," came the answer in an enigmatic Scottish burr. Just the sort of comment to keep the kids enthralled and the parents amused, which pretty much sums up what Delphi, in Leenane, Co Galway, is all about. Set within 400 acres of Connemara forest, just a short drive from one of the world's finest surfing spots, Cross Beach, and against a stunning backdrop of the Mweelrea and 12 Bens mountain ranges, Delphi offers a range of challenging adventure activities to tire out the tykes, while the grown-ups can indulge themselves with excellent food and wind down in the superb spa, winner of the 2009 Irish Tatler IT Factor Spa Award.

The Deal One night B&B with half-day activities (from ages eight up) for two adults and two kids in a family room (double bed and bunk beds) from €199 per room, or upgrade to a luxury family suite from €299. Delphi is also offering fun kids' activities (four-seven years' old) during the day for €5 per session (half-day) which will include fishing and butterfly catching, with free kids' entertainment from 7pm to 10pm for ages four-15 including DVDs and 'nightline' walks through the forest.

Tel: 095 422208; www.delphimountainresort.com



RENVYLE HOUSE HOTEL RENVYLE, CONNEMARA, CO GALWAY

Renvyle scooped the Georgina Campbell 'Family Friendly Hotel of the Year 2009' and it's easy to see why. To start, it has lots of natural advantages with its stunning Connemara location along the Atlantic coast. It sits on 200 acres, which includes a private lake, a nine-hole golf course, beach, woodlands and gardens, which provide plenty of scope for fun but there is also a diverse activity programme covering a broad spectrum of interests. In July and



August, free activities include scuba diving, a fly fishing academy, yoga classes, a daily kiddies club (from 2pm to 9.30pm with supervised games, arts and crafts, treasure hunts etc), tennis tournaments, boules and walks around the Renvyle peninsula to name but a few. There are family suites and family

apartments available. Children's dinner is served at 5.30pm with babysitters on hand so adults can dine and let their hair down later.

The Deal April and May family breaks are from €599 (two adults and two children sharing) to include three nights' B&B, two gourmet dinners for adults and three high teas for children. The same deal in June costs €649; from 4-24 July, €699; from 25-31 July, €789 and from 1-28 August, €849.

Tel: 095 43511; www.renvyle.com

KELLY'S RESORT HOTEL AND SPA ROSSLARE, CO WEXFORD

A glittering east-coast jewel, Kelly's has been family-run for four generations, and it shows. Its five miles of sandy beaches is a definite lure but Kelly's likes to say that no matter what the weather, there's always something to do. The resort has established itself by offering leisure activities a cut above the average: throughout the year there are gardening talks with Dermot O'Neill for example, or free golf clinics with a pro. Family facilities include a supervised playroom, a games room and a new pirate ship outdoor play area. There's also a special children's tea at 5.30pm with entertainment afterwards. Adults should definitely avail of down time in



the SeaSpa, which has 11 treatment rooms as well as a seawater vitality pool, bio sauna, seaweed baths, pebble walkway, ice fountain and mud room. If you're a golfer, Kelly's is an exceptionally good choice with several championship golf courses within minutes' drive of the hotel.

The Deal Kelly's is offering a special mid-week rate during April/May of €121 per adult sharing, which is full board plus 15% service charge. Kids under four are charged €25, under 10 €81 and under 14 €91 full board per night. Bear in mind Kelly's only sells six- or seven-day holidays during the summer months and it's almost always booked out then.

Tel: 053 9132114; www.kellys.ie

PARKNASILLA RESORT SNEEM, CO KERRY

Having 'something for everyone' is one of those irritating phrases that rarely holds up under close scrutiny but in the case of Parknasilla Resort, it's actually true. It has the scenery, it has the subtropical vegetation, it has the spa, it has the playground that is 500 acres of gorgeous Kerry countryside and it has an unsurpassed number of activities so if you don't find some elements to enjoy here, you're very silly indeed. Best of all is Parknasilla's attitude to children: they are perceived as guests of the future and are catered to accordingly with special menus, entertainment and activities. There are 92 bedrooms and suites at the hotel but the 24 two-bedroom courtyard lodges just off the main building and the 38 spacious three-bedroom villas are particularly suited to families. The latter have their own kitchen if you'd prefer the self-catering option although you'll still have access to the hotel facilities and all of the on-site activities.

The Deal Three nights B&B and two evening meals in a family room is from €299 per adult and €135 per child under 12. Included is children's tea time and two hours of supervised play each evening with access to the swimming pool, an activity pack and mapped walks with interactive play maps. This deal is running until the end of the summer.

Tel: 064 667 5600; www.parknasillahotel.ie

