

Travel

Bringing you all the latest deals and offers



ROLL OUT THE RED CARPET

FRESH, bold and brimming with energy, Radisson RED is Ireland's newest hotel brand, and Galway's newest hotel. With a playful vibe, bold artwork and a rooftop restaurant, this is the place to shake off the winter

blues and start 2025 on a high note. Treat yourself to an overnight stay for two with dinner at Lena's, the stunning rooftop restaurant and bar that offers panoramic views all the way

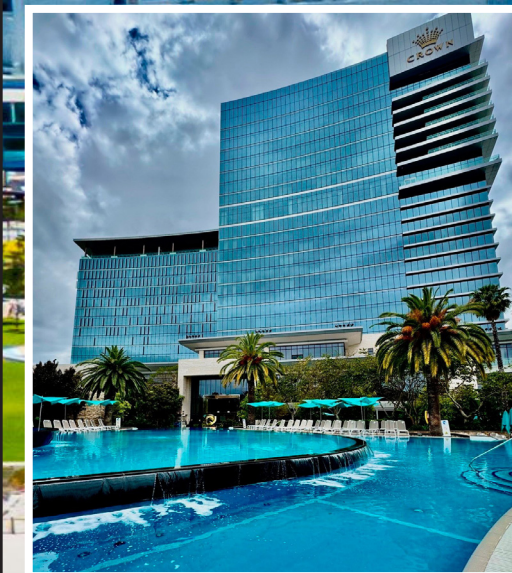
over Galway Bay and to the Clare Hills. Whether you're planning a fun weekend getaway or a relaxing escape, Lena's vibrant atmosphere and delicious dining will ensure you're kicking off January in style. Radisson

RED Galway is all about art, music and culture. Just minutes from the city centre in the new Crown Square neighbourhood, this eight-storey hotel features 177 rooms, sleek design, and lots of spaces to unwind. Lena's

rooftop venue is the star of the show — think cocktails, comfort food, and incredible views that make it feel like a celebration. Whether exploring the city or simply soaking up the views, Radisson RED is the perfect place

to paint those January blues red. An overnight stay for two, including dinner is available from €170 B&B. For bookings and more information, visit [www.radissonred.com](http://www.radissonred.com).

Walking on sunshine



OZ-SOME: Scarborough Beach boasts white sands and turquoise waters



CHARMING: Fremantle is worth a visit



STUNNING: Sunset at Scarborough Beach is breathtaking. Below: The rooftop pool at Vibe Hotel Subiaco

Travel FACTFILE

- David flew from Dublin to Singapore (via Abu Dhabi) with Ethiad, and Singapore to Perth with Jetstar.
- Hotels:
- Crown Towers Resort: [www.crowntowers.com.au](http://www.crowntowers.com.au)
- Vetroblu: [www.ramada-vetrobluscarboroughbeach.com](http://www.ramada-vetrobluscarboroughbeach.com)
- Vibe Hotel Subiaco: [www.vibehotels.com](http://www.vibehotels.com)



It was a typical Sunday afternoon in a typical Irish pub. The black stuff was flowing, roast dinners were on offer, accents from across Ireland could be heard and there were great tunes from a singer from Portaferry, Co Down.

The view and atmosphere, however, were entirely different. As I looked across The Galway Hooker's terrace, Indian Ocean waves crashed onto golden sands, surfers were competing and the temperature was a steady 30c. Welcome to Scarborough Beach, Perth, Western Australia.

Latest annual figures from the Australian Department of Home Affairs show more than 21,000 under-35s from the island of Ireland have been granted working holiday visas.

That figure is expected to increase when 2024 figures are finalised. My youngest son is one of them, so an opportunity to visit was also a chance to find out why Perth, WA, acts like a magnet to the Irish diaspora.

It's commonly said that social

DAVID GORDON heads to Perth and discovers why so many from these shores fall in love with it

media has made the world a smaller place. To a degree, that is true. I can video-chat with my son regularly and see his updates (at least those he wants me to) on Instagram. However, I'll admit the world did not feel that small after my 29-hour journey from Dublin to Perth, via short stopovers in Abu Dhabi and Singapore.

It wasn't the fault of Etihad Airways, the flights were virtually turbulence free and the Economy deluxe seats were quite comfortable, I am just not great at sleeping on planes.

Now that I am of an age where I prefer my comforts, a Priority Pass for lounges in each of the airports was a wise investment, letting me shower and freshen up along the way while adjusting to time zone changes and sustaining a semblance of normality.

My first view of Perth was at night, from the window of my room at the Crown Towers Resort.

As I gazed out, the cityscape shimmered in the reflections on the Swan River. I wasn't expecting it to look so prosperous and that sense continued as I took a late night wander through the resort, which boasts numerous restaurants, hotels, a theatre and Western Australia's only 24-hour casino.

REUNION

The resort is 'the place' to be seen in Perth and you'd expect a five-star facility of this calibre to be on the pricey side. However, with the exchange rate, and comparative prices of hotel rooms in Dublin at the moment, Irish visitors will be pleasantly surprised.

Perth has an excellent public transport system, easily navigated by downloading the Transperth app. Journeys are already inexpensive but you can save more with a Smartrider

card which offers discounted trips and free travel across the network every Sunday and throughout the summer months. I used the app to plan my trip across the city to Scarborough Beach for the all-important reunion with my son.

Stepping off the bus on my arrival at Scarborough Beach where he lives and works, I was swept into a real-life episode of Home and Away.

There were surfboards and beachwear stores, coffee shops, sandwich bars, and ocean as far as the eye could see.

I immediately decided to decamp from the city and book into the well-appointed Ramada Vetroblu apartments which overlook the beach.

The receptionist advised me to be on my balcony at sunset as I wouldn't want to miss it. They were not wrong. As the sun set over the

Indian Ocean, the sky became a blaze of colours, from pink to red to a deep orange. As darkness fell, I heard what sounded like a party at the seafront, so I wandered down and discovered a sunset market, dance lessons and food trucks on the promenade. I was surprised to discover that by 8pm it was all over and I virtually had the seafront to myself.

I was even more surprised to find nearly all bars and restaurants were closed by 10pm. Granted it was a weeknight, but it seemed quite early.

After one sleepless night, probably due to jet-lag, I found myself awake around 5am, just before sunrise.

At 5.10am, in The Truman Show style, it was like someone had switched on a light outside and the whole place sprung into life. At a time when most of us in Ireland are turning over for our second sleep, in Western Australia that is when the day starts.

There were walkers, joggers, surfers and swimmers ensuring they could make the most of the sunshine before starting their day's work.

I thought I'd join the fray and go for

a 6am swim in the thermally-heated outdoor pool and was dumbfounded to discover some 200 people already in the water either speed-swimming or doing aerobics.

Having my son as a driver and tour guide was actually quite refreshing as he wanted me to see his local finds, such as Fremantle, with its famous prison and the rooftop bar at the historic National Hotel, Hilary's Harbour, where catamarans depart for Rottnest Island, plus some of the beaches on the West Coast Highway.

In return, I was able to introduce him to a few places nearby which jumped out from the guidebooks.

Any wine aficionado will know that the Swan Valley area, just north of Perth, is renowned for its produce.

In fact there are more than 40 world-class wineries, 10 breweries, five distilleries, three cideries and multiple gourmet producers within a few minutes' drive of each other.

All of which would keep me content for a week or so. Sadly, time was against us so I chose one of the most historic vineyards, Sandalfords, to enjoy a visit and tasting. That was

followed by a visit to the Yahava Coffee Roasters and the Swan Valley Market. Another destination actually piqued the interest of my son's housemates and work colleagues. In true school trip fashion, we all landed in convoy at the Cavendish Wildlife Park where we came face to face with koala bears, kangaroos and crocodiles amongst many other native creatures and birds.

Our day was made though, when, on heading back to the car, we saw a wild kangaroo, which was a reminder that the outback is not actually that far from the city limits.

Perth is a city made up of urban villages, each with its own distinct vibe. One of the oldest is Subiaco, which is relatively close to the Central Business District (CBD) but feels a world away, with

its quirky art deco buildings including theatres, restaurants and hotels. The Vibe Hotel is one of the newer offerings. Many rooms offer great views across Kings Park, one of the world's largest inner city parks.

When I visited, temperatures were in the low 30s so the rooftop pool was an oasis after a day of sightseeing and people watching.

Weeknights in the Perth area are relatively quiet. One evening, I walked the 3km from Subiaco into the CBD and only met one other pedestrian.

Even in the height of summer, sunset is before 7.30pm, but given sunrise is early and people make the most of daylight hours, they tend to lay low until the weekend.

Perth is an affluent city.

Many thousands are FIFO (Fly-in, Fly-out) workers. This system sees employers transport employees to a site of work a few hours away, and take them back for rest periods. It is particularly prevalent in the mining and farming industries in Australia.

It can be a hard lifestyle but from a salary perspective it is also quite lucrative, which is what makes the scheme so attractive to young Irish folk on working holiday visas.

Perth is somewhat isolated, nearly 3,000km from nearest city neighbour, Adelaide, and there's a sense of independence and self-sufficiency.

In my short stop in the city and its environs, I found friendly people, excellent accommodation, stunning scenery, a great transport system and a real understanding of a work/life balance... no doubt, some of the reasons for a growing Irish population.

I understand why many parents wonder what made their child flee the nest and travel as far as possible.

I suppose that is one reason why I wanted to see for myself, as well as the need to see some sunshine before another long, dark winter.

9th February 2025

€1331pps

4\* Hotel Princesa Parc, H/B Arinsal, Andorra Fly from Dublin

Andorra - Austria - France - Italy

Book with us today

028 9568 0101

www.skimcneill.com