

OCTOBER 2024 • ISSUE NO. 251 • \$8.95

AGENTS **at** HOME

The REAL Travel Influencers!

BY NORTHSTAR

CLUB MED'S EXPANDING EXCLUSIVE COLLECTION

A LOOK INTO THE COMPANY'S
MANY LUXURY RESORTS AND ENCLAVES

FEATURING

CAROLYNE DOYON,
PRESIDENT AND CEO
OF CLUB MED'S NORTH
AMERICAN AND
CARIBBEAN DIVISION

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TAPPING INTO
TODAY'S LUXURY
TRAVEL MARKET

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More Destinations, Same Superlative Experience

CIE TOURS REPLICATES THE QUALITY OF ITS IRELAND AND U.K. VACATIONS IN SUCH DESTINATIONS AS ITALY AND SPAIN

By Harvey Chipkin

For more than 90 years, CIE Tours has been known for its highly regarded tours to Ireland and the U.K. And now that it has expanded elsewhere in Europe, the operator intends to maintain its reputation as a company that “delivers well,” said CIE Tours Managing Director Stephen Cotter.

Several years ago, CIE Tours moved beyond its traditional destinations into Iceland and Italy – and now will expand into Spain next year. The main reason for the expansion was to generate more repeat business, Cotter said, adding that while customers love the CIE Tours’ experience, many want to visit places beyond Ireland and the U.K.

After Spain is in 2025, CIE will likely not expand for the next few years, although additional itineraries may be introduced, as is the case with a new Sicily tour, Cotter said. “We are not a global operator, but only wanted to replicate the Ireland and U.K. experience in a few more places.”

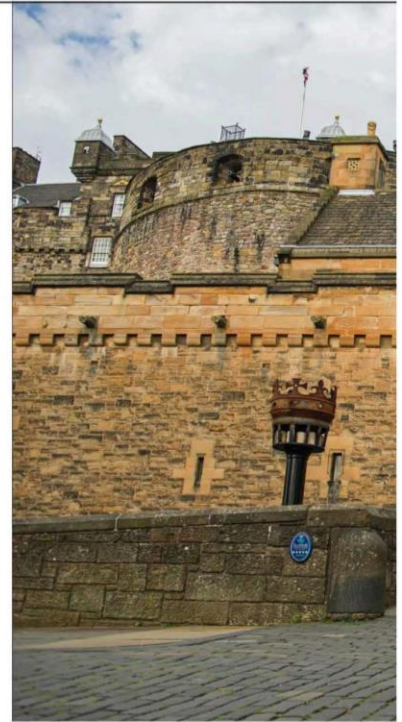
1 NEW ‘IRISH SUPREME’ TOUR

In Ireland, CIE is launching the new nine-day “Irish Supreme” deluxe tour. While most programs are in the premium four-star category, this tour includes multiple five-star properties and exceptional activities.

The company’s “Daytripper” tours – where guests stay in one hotel for a week while enjoying day trips – have become increasingly more popular. Customers like that option “because they only have to unpack once,” Cotter said. The newest version is the “Dublin Daytripper.”



“Travel advisors are the most important channel we have. When they book with us, their customers will come back happy – and nothing else matters.” — Stephen Cotter, CIE Tours



A Guinness toast in a pub. (Photo courtesy of CIE Tours)



Edinburgh Castle in Scotland. (Photo by Amber Baruck courtesy of CIE Tours)



▲ Ireland's Cliffs of Moher. (Photo courtesy of Tourism Ireland)

2 TAILORED GROUP SALES

Group sales are as important as ever, with private-driver business (2 to 9 people) growing rapidly. A lot of potential guests “think that it will be too expensive, but they are often surprised that it’s not,” Cotter said. “We can tailor the trip to their needs and make great recommendations because we really are the experts in Ireland and Scotland.

FAST FACTS

- CIE Tours’ Stephen Cotter said advisors should tell clients “that we are specialists, and we simply do it better.”
- With CIE’s all-inclusive approach, advisors obtain commission on every element in the tour.
- The operator features a broad mix of guests with 15 percent of the market solo travelers. Women comprise 60 percent of customers. About two-thirds are over 55 with a third under that age.
- For environmentally oriented clients, CIE has accelerated its sustainability goals, including taking on its first sustainability manager. It is working with suppliers toward a 50 percent reduction in corporate emissions and those from land arrangements, and a 25 percent reduction in air emissions – all by 2030.

“What CIE Tours brings to all its programs is a spirit of hospitality. And while others may promise that, CIE Tours also delivers an all-inclusive approach to pricing.”

Tour directors “are only focused on guests having a good time because there is nothing else for them to sell,” Cotter added.

3 SUPPORTING TRAVEL ADVISORS

CIE Tours has 13 business development managers around the U.S. and a large staff in New Jersey, which is there to support advisors. “We have to be more creative these days because of the growth of home-based advisors,” Cotter said. “I love to hear the stories at our sales meetings about how our representatives are reaching people by hosting breakfasts and lunches and getting advisors out of their homes to meet in small groups.”

The operator will introduce a new advisor portal in the fourth quarter that will include more advanced technology, which will enhance relationships even more with extensive access to information. It will be a one-stop shop, including bookings, he said.

“We support the people who support us,” said Cotter. “Travel advisors are the most important channel we have. When they book with us, their customers will come back happy – and nothing else matters.”