

PASSENGERS FLYING HIGH AT IRELAND WEST AIRPORT

2018 was the busiest year on record at Ireland West Airport with passenger numbers climbing to over 770,000 for the first time in the airport's history, surpassing the previous record of 750,000 passengers in 2017. It also celebrated the official opening of the new state-of-the-art Visitor Discovery Centre, in collaboration with the airport's seven local authority partners.

Last year was a memorable one for Ireland West Airport with the historic visit of Pope Francis in August, marking yet another milestone in the airport's history. It was also a special day particularly for the 100 school children from local schools who each had an opportunity to greet the Pope in person.

In November 2018 the airport celebrated the official opening of the new state-of-the-art Visitor Discovery Centre, in collaboration with the airport's seven local authority partners. Sligo County Council took the lead role in the co-ordination of the project alongside Donegal, Galway City & County, Leitrim, Mayo and Roscommon County Councils, the Western Development Commission, Minister Ring and the Department of Rural & Community Development.

The new Visitor Discovery Centre features information on attractions, activities, events and visitor experiences from across the region and presents opportunities for local suppliers to showcase local crafts and food tastings.

It also facilitates musical performances from local musicians throughout the year. Dedicated staff members trained by Fáilte Ireland will be on hand on a weekly basis to inform overseas visitors of the many attractions, events and things to do across the region.

COMBINED RESOURCES ACHIEVE RESULTS

The completion of the project is a very positive example of what can be achieved when resources are combined, in a regional approach to tourism promotion.

This new centre will be the first of its kind at any airport in the country and will showcase the very best of what the West and North West has to offer.

It demonstrates a commitment by both the airport and local authority partners to providing overseas visitors with a first class



The new Visitor Discovery Centre was opened in November 2018.

offering as they arrive into the West of Ireland.

This year has got off to a very positive start with the announcement of a new twice-weekly service to Cologne with Ryanair starting on 1 June. This new service is a major boost for tourism in the West and North West regions of Ireland as it provides the only direct access to the West Coast from the North Rhine-Westphalia region.

Germany is the third-largest market for tourism to the island of Ireland with a record year forecasted in 2018 of over 650,000 German visitors with 50% of German holidaymakers visiting the West and North West of Ireland during their stay.

In addition Ryanair will increase capacity by 33% on its twice weekly service to Barcelona, starting in April. Further good news is the extension of their Bristol and Tenerife services to now operate all year round. This will provide for a further 17,000 seats in 2019 as the airport looks set to reach a new record high of 800,000 passengers this year.