

CRUISE



PERFECT MATCH The MSC Divina, below; Willie on the ship's dance floor, below

'First Dates' at sea with cruising's answer to Fred

ROMANCE AFLOAT

Irish matchmaker Willie Daly takes to the high seas to play Cupid on board one of the world's largest cruise ships



here will you find men for all these women? ... as we approached the dock and I noticed a huge crowd of women waiting to board the biggest ship I had ever seen.

at horse fairs, cattle marts and funerals, whereas mine would take place for the next eight days on board the MSC Divina - a vast ship which, at 1,092ft (333m) long, was about half the length of a whole street in Lisdoonvarna, in Ireland, where I live.

The US singer Andy Cooney met me at the festival last year and invited me to join his "Cruise of Irish Stars", an eight-day trip from Miami to Mexico. Along with a host of Irish performers, I'd be matchmaking daily with mostly Irish-American guests.

DATING GAME Willie Daly, right, compares himself to Fred Sirieix, below, presenter of TV's 'First Dates'

'Everyone, including myself, was really just after the same thing: to love and be cherished'



TALKING POINT Cruises are an ideal way to meet like-minded people



meetings often happened after Mass, which I attended every day. I'd ask passengers to fill in a matchmaking form and then I'd input their details in my lucky book. If inspiration struck and I thought of a suitable couple, I'd mastermind an introduction.

ESSENTIALS

The next departure of Andy Cooney's seven-night Cruise of Irish Stars (001 845 651 4441; cruiseofirishstars.com), visiting the eastern Caribbean aboard Celebrity Equinox, is from January 20-27 2018.

walking up and down the streets, chatting to some of the traders. A couple I met on the boat, John and Anastasia from County Wicklow, suggested we hire a taxi to explore the island and before long we were driving through jungle-covered hills up to the popular tourist attraction, Dunn's River Falls.

On the way back, the taxi driver took us to a "shebeen" and we enjoyed local beer and sampled some Jamaica rum. Before long we were all up on the dance floor, enjoying the reggae music and dancing with some of the Jamaican women.

Some days later, we stopped off in Cozumel, a small Mexican island in the Caribbean, famous for its beautiful coral reefs and beaches. At first the humidity was almost unbearable but I soon got used to it. Near the centre there was a small market, with stalls selling all sorts of wonderful items.



TRAVEL TRUTHS

Hugh Morris on why your aircraft seat is marked with a black triangle

Window seats with a substantial view of the wing are a thrill to some and a scourge to others - why are those flaps moving? Is the wing meant to shake that much? Is that a grenlin? But window seats don't exist entirely for the passenger's benefit - they are also of use to the captain.

Another puzzling addition in many aircraft is the ashtray in the lavatory cubicle - despite no one being allowed to smoke on a plane this side of the millennium. Why are they still there? According to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) list of "minimum equipment" for aircraft, an ashtray in each plane lavatory is still a legal requirement.

Another respondent pointed out that advances in technology mean that visual checks from William Shatner's Seat occur less and less often. So why are the stickers still there? "Aeroplanes are expensive, so they last forever," said airline pilot Steven Hooper. "Features are never removed, and useless ones are generally still maintained."

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