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7M British TV viewers to see Ireland in popular

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A massive audience of approximately seven million TV viewers around Britain will see images of Ireland in BBC's hugely popular Three Men in a Boat Christmas special later this week.

Two hour-long programmes in the Three Men in a Boat series, shot here in Ireland earlier this year, will air on BBC 2 on Wednesday (30th December) and Friday (1st January). The anticipated viewership figures for each programme are seven million, with a further four million people expected to watch the repeats of each programme later in January.

Tourism Ireland in London worked closely with Liberty Bell Productions to bring the fourth series of Three Men in a Boat to Ireland. Starring well-known Irish comedian Dara O'Briain, as well as Griff Rhys-Jones and Rory McGrath, the Christmas special of Three Men in a Boat will see the trio make their way across Ireland, from east to west, starting in Dublin on board the last original Guinness barge.

Taking in the sights and meeting various characters along the way, they jump between the Grand and Royal Canals, stopping off in Mullingar for a night at the dogs - where they watch Dara's greyhound, Snip Nua, take part in a race. They then sail down the Shannon to Limerick, where Dara and Griff try a spot of power-boat racing and Rory decides to host his own poetry festival for Limericks only - the inaugural Limerick Limerick competition! The journey ends with a trip to the stunning Aran Islands, where the Men take a Galway hooker to visit the megalithic fort of Dún Aengus.

Niall Gibbons, Chief Executive of Tourism Ireland, said: "The Three Men programmes provide us with a tremendous opportunity to showcase Ireland, and in particular the Lakelands Region and our waterways, to a huge British audience of potential holidaymakers. The publicity value of a programme like this is incalculable; it really is an excellent way of promoting Ireland to a massive TV audience around GB.

"Great Britain is the largest and most important market for tourism to the island of Ireland and 2010 is the year when Tourism Ireland, with support from the tourism industry, will return the GB market to growth. We believe that we can deliver a +2% growth in visitor numbers from GB next year. To turn the market around, we will implement activities that are big, impactful and innovative and above all, deliver business. We have an exceptionally strong promotional programme in the pipeline for GB for 2010; we will be placing significant emphasis on value for money offers, to drive home to British consumers our message about the superb range of offers available around the island of Ireland."

To capitalise on the huge exposure for Ireland around the airing of both Three Men programmes, Tourism Ireland in GB has a busy promotional campaign under way right now which includes a very visible Lakelands ad in the Christmas edition of the Radio Times and extensive online advertising on leading websites. 'New' media, including sms (text) marketing and social networking websites Twitter and Facebook are also being used as part of the overall campaign.

Three Men in a Boat is an adaptation of the most popular comic novel of the Victorian era, Jerome K Jerome's story which was based on a river journey between Kingston and Oxford.

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