

The extra mile

Customisation is key to Adams & Butler, which pulls out all the stops for clients in Ireland and internationally when arranging memorable trips to destinations around the world

Whether it is staying with a tribe in Africa or going on a 'ski safari' in the South Tyrol, a holiday arranged through Adams & Butler means a personalised, authentic experience for mid- to high-end clients. "With us, you don't just see and do, you feel and are engaged," says Siobhán Byrne Learat, who established the company in 2002.

In the early days, Adams & Butler focused on providing bespoke holidays in Ireland and the UK. This has expanded to destinations worldwide and the company is now a specialist in Africa, Australia, the Americas and high-end cruises.

Being the only Irish member of the prestigious Virtuoso travel consortia network has been central to Adams & Butler's success in Ireland and internationally. "We can offer cruises at the same price as other agents or travel sites, but we can arrange US\$500 onboard credit because Virtuoso has negotiated this with the cruise ships," says Byrne Learat.

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Up until recently, Adams & Butler was very much a business-to-business company whose offerings were booked by travel agents. Thanks to coverage in the New York Times and Washington Post – and the fact that Byrne Learat is a Travel Leisure A-List travel advisor in Ireland – an increasing number of American clients in particular want to book directly.

When dealing with clients, the Adams & Butler team of ten people are "straightforward, open and sometimes blunt", she says. "It is our responsibility to discuss a trip warts and all because we believe it is not the positives that will make it but the negatives that will break it. We also always look for genuine feedback from our clients."

Sustainability is very much at the heart of everything Adams & Butler does. "It is important for us to use local suppliers and one-man bands to help local communities to survive and thrive. Our suppliers are our partners on the ground and we see them as an extension of ourselves. We do simple things otherwise like making sure the hotels and guides we contract with



Siobhán Byrne Learat, founder, Adams & Butler

don't use plastic bottles," explains Byrne Learat, who has been invited to speak as a sustainability ambassador at TFest, a luxury travel trade fair in Dubai in 2021.

She also won the ITAA Best Travel Professional award at the Irish Travel Industry Awards last January. "This was interesting as we are quite a maverick company and the fact we were awarded is an example of how the business is changing and has to change," she notes. About 10% of Adams & Butler's clients are now Irish, further to launching here a year ago.

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Gary Redmond, Liam Brennan and Paul Carrick, co-founders of BusterBox

Perfect for pooches

Recognising the potential for the subscription-based model in Ireland, BusterBox is getting tails wagging with its boxes of goodies for dogs, particularly in the UK market

A shared love of dogs brought Gary Redmond, Liam Brennan and Paul Carrick together to create Buster Box, which is a monthly subscription box full of naturally produced, chemical-free treats and toys for dogs.

The company was set up in 2016 because all three found it difficult to source toys and treats for their own dogs in local pet shops. At the same time, they saw an opening for subscription boxes in Ireland having researched the growing success rates for these in the US market.

Every month a new box of healthy toys is delivered, specifically tailored to an individual dog's needs and size. "We try to incorporate superior treats in our boxes and we're now giving our existing clients a trial of a premium dog food which is sourced from the UK," says Redmond.

The main objective is to give an experience of happiness to the dog owners and dogs. Redmond says: "When the box arrives on a regular basis the dog knows it's for them and gets so excited when they see it coming. They know what's in it before it's opened so it's a joint experience of happiness for both owner and dog. And that's what the customer is paying for."

The items change every month so it's a surprise for the customer and dog. An added aspect that appeals to dog owners is that a percentage of the money goes to charity. Last year BusterBox partnered with the Dublin Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and DogsTrust delivering boxes at Christmas to dogs with no homes.

Using Facebook as a marketing tool, Busterbox has been able to hone in on where its target audience is based. The co-founders discovered that it is more cost effective for them to advertise in the UK because of the population size.

With 80% of the business in the UK already, Redmond says the company is continuing to consolidate there, but is also looking at Germany down the line as one of its target markets.

BusterBox is developing its own premium, grain-free dog food with hopes to launch this in the near future. Customer research has shown a demand for doggy dental care, another area the company would like to get into. Redmond, Brennan and Carrick are currently looking to investors to help them fulfil these ambitions.

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BusterBox is also shortlisted in the Outstanding Small Business category

www.adamsandbutler.com

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