

MY HOLIDAYS

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What's your earliest holiday memory? When I was four I went with my dad's family en masse to Clearwater Beach, in Florida. I remember sitting at the emergency exit on the plane with my granny. I also remember the wee armbands I wore in the swimming pool and the hot sunshine.

What was your worst holiday? I travelled a lot at university. I wanted to get to Istanbul, and the only way I could do it on a student budget was with a package holiday. It was to Bodrum, and it was wretched. The accommodation had no air conditioning, and it was in an awful development. Worse than sex and drugs in Ibiza.

What was your best holiday? My most interesting and memorable holiday was to Vietnam last year. The Far East is so different with its climate and culture. We swam in the South China Sea, which is like a hot bath. The country is like Spain and Portugal 30 years ago – it has a lovely rough innocence. We also visited the Christina Noble centre for kids

who have been blinded or partially blinded by Agent Orange. I did Irish dancing for them – I was a champion Irish dancer – and they were mesmerised. We touched the hearts and minds of each other.

If budget or work were not a restriction, what would be your dream holiday? The ingredients would be sun, beautiful beaches, a fantastic golf course, great architecture and culture. I am just back from Portugal, and there, with Spain and Italy, is the European culture to go towards. It really opens the mind to see beautiful old buildings. Architecture makes you think and is as important as culture, food and a different language.

If you had your pick, who would you bring on holiday with you? My other half has a similar mindset and likes the same type of travel.

What's your favourite place in Ireland? I really love the north Antrim coast. There is a dip in the road when driving between Whitepark Bay and Portrush,

close to the Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge. You come over the brow of a hill and suddenly see this spectacular and breathtaking scenery. There are sheer cliffs and mini green islands. The scale of it all is phenomenal. I love that part of the world.

Your recommended holiday reading? I like listening to audio books on my iPod more than reading. I listen to self-development and business books, as I spend my holiday renewing. This time it was *Zen Golf*, a fantastic Tiger Woodsy philosophy of life. Golf for me is a great leveller, and you can learn things about life on the golf course – such as only to look forwards and not back.

Where will you go to next? My next trip will be to South Africa.

■ Architect Una McQuillan will present the new series of *About the House* with Duncan Stewart on RTÉ One

■ In conversation with Genevieve Carbery



Golf lessons: Una McQuillan with her clubs by the sea in Vale do Lobo, in Portugal