

EXCLUSIVE IRISH KIDS GET A TASTE OF LAPLAND AS THE

SANTA'S LITTLE

Our girl Geraldine receives an early present from Father Christmas



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SUNDAY WORLD
A REAL IRISH SUNDAY



FANS: Kids give their wishlist to the main man

LIKE any girl I love men who are generous with the pressies.

So I was thrilled when I got a date with Santa.

Never mind that I had to share him with millions of children – a bloke who is loved by kids the world over has to be all right.

And as for Mrs Claus – well, I was sure she wouldn't mind if I just borrowed him for a few minutes.

While she was back at the North Pole wrapping all the presents, Santa and I were having our very own taste of Lapland – in Dublin.

He was on a tour of shopping centres around the country to meet his young friends and, most importantly, find out what they want for Christmas.

I caught up with him in Blanchardstown Shopping Centre, where he was surrounded by hundreds of kids from all over Ireland.

It was like meeting a rock star – only cooler, because Santa has more fans than any other celeb.

Of course he was surrounded by minders and for a scary moment I thought they would tell me to elf off.

But they were only too happy to help and Santa was every bit as jolly as I imagined when I was growing up.

Squeezing

I must be the biggest girl ever to sit on his lap. I've been tucking into the Christmas choccies a few weeks early and after a few minutes his legs must have felt like Frosty the Snowman – but it was snow bother to him.

This is, after all, a man who can carry a heavy sack of presents, while squeezing down chimneys. I was hoping he would give me a few tips on how to fit into a party dress that's a size too small but Santa insists his trip is all magic.

Still, he did reveal that he would bring me a very nice surprise for Christmas – even though I had to admit to being a bit of a bold girl.

"I'm not Santa-monious," he said with a chuckle. "I bring presents to everyone."

And I was ho-ho-happy when he let me try on one of his spare hats.

"I didn't always wear red. My costume used to be green," he revealed. Not wanting to be unpatriotic, I told him that red suited him better. It matches his rosy cheeks and, of course, Rudolph's nose.

But I really knew I had impressed Santa when he let me tug his beard. Just as I expected, it was soft, fluffy and tickly.

I had just one more request – a jaunt

By GERALDINE COMISKEY

on the sleigh. But Santa had wisely left Rudolph and Co. at home, so he could enjoy some seasonal drinks before he gets to work.

Not that he had to hoof it all the way from the North Pole. "I got one of my elves to fly me into Blanchardstown by helicopter," he revealed.

"Anyway, the reindeer need to rest before Christmas. It's the only time of year they do any work – unlike myself. I have to work all year round helping children who need me. It's a Claus in my contract."

Not wanting to wear him out before the busy season ahead, I handed Santa back to his chief elf, Audrey, and the hordes of kids who were waiting outside his grotto.

They included Katie Doherty (11), and her sister Anna (2), from nearby Castleknock, who were there with their parents Gary and Annemarie. Anna said she had asked Santa for a bicycle and a toy horse, while Katie revealed: "I'm getting a Wii."

Maevie and Katie Donnelly came all the way from Fermanagh to meet Santa. Katie (5), said she wanted to ask him to bring her an outfit for her Baby Born – who is one year old this Christmas and who was brought by Santa last Christmas. "I want a surprise, too," she added.

Her sister Maeve (6), wants a pink iPod and a High School Musical doll and she said Santa already knows. "We told Santa when we wrote our letters to him and he answered us," Maeve told me. They just wanted to remind him.

And to thank him, they're going to leave out some nibbles for him and the reindeer on Christmas Eve. "I'll leave mince pies out for him and a drop of milk and a carrot for the reindeer," Maeve said.

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